A Body Of Practical Divinity , Book I And II

Dr John Gill DD

A BODY OF
PRACTICAL DIVINITY

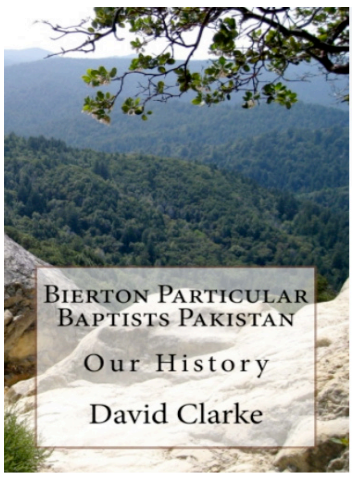
BOOKS I AND II of IV Books
or
A SYSTEM OF PRACTICAL TRUTHS, DEDUCED FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

BY DR. JOHN GILL DD
PREPARED BY David Clarke FOR STUDENTS AT BIERTON PARTICULAR BAPTIST'S COLLEGE, Pakistan

Published by
Bierton Particular Baptists
11 Hayling Close
Fareham
Hampshire
PO143AE
SecretaryDolores@yahoo.co.uk
www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

Preface

This reproduction of Dr John Gill's Body of Practical Divinity is Book I and II of IV books, and has been reproduced for the benefit of students at Christchurch Bierton Particular Baptists, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.



Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan is the first in Pakistan and founded by David Clarke. Mr Clarke is the sole surviving member of Bierton Particular Baptist, founded in 1831. in England, and was a Gospel Standard Cause. This book tells of the formation of Bierton Particular Baptist Pakistan 2016 along with the formation of a Minister Bible college. David Clarke appointed minister Anil Anwar and Anwar Shahid John of Rahim Yar Khan, as overseers work and the articles of religion and doctrinal foundation are those to the Bierton Particular Baptists 1831.

View the Wikipedia Entry for **Bierton** and view ***None Conformist Place of Worship***

John Gill (23 November 1697 – 14 October 1771) was an English Baptist pastor, biblical scholar, and theologian who held to a firm Calvinistic soteriology. Born in Kettering , Northamptonshire, he attended Kettering Grammar School where he mastered the Latin classics and learned Greek by age 11. He continued self-study in everything from logic to Hebrew, his love for the latter remaining throughout his life.

Pastoral Work

His first pastoral work was as an intern assisting John Davis at Higham Ferrers in 1718 at age 21. He became pastor at the Strict Baptists church at Goat Yard Chapel, Horselydown, Southwark in 1719. His pastorate lasted 51 years. In 1757 his congregation needed larger premises and moved to a Carter Lane, St. Olave's Street, Southwark. This Baptist church was once pastored by Benjamin Keach and would later become the New Park Street Chapel and then the Metropolitan Tabernacle pastored by Charles Spurgeon.

Works

In 1748, Gill was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Aberdeen. He was a profound scholar and a prolific author. His most important works are:

- The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated London, 1731)
- The Cause of God and Truth (4 parts, 1725-8), a retort to Daniel Whitby's Five Points. • An Exposition of the New Testament (3 vols., 1746–8), which with his Exposition of the Old Testament (6 vols., 1748–63) forms his magnum opus
- A Collection of Sermons and Tracts
- A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points, and Accents (1767)
- A Body of Doctrinal Divinity (1767)
- A Body of Practical Divinity (1770)

Gill also edited and re-published the works of **Rev. Tobias Crisp, D.D**. (1600-1643).

NOTE:

We have not included the Greek, Hebrew or Latin text in the interest of economy.

Contents

BOOK I

Of The Worship Of God, Or Practical Religion

CHAPTER I 6
OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP 6
Chapter 1 6
OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP 6
Chapter 2 9
OF INTERNAL WORSHIP 9
Chapter 3 13
OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD 13
Chapter 4 22
OF REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD 22
Chapter 5 31
OF THE FEAR OF GOD 31
Chapter 6 39
OF FAITH IN GOD AND IN CHRIST 39
Chapter 7 55
OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD 55
Chapter 8 62
OF THE GRACE OF HOPE 63
Chapter 9 71
OF THE GRACE OF LOVE 71
Chapter 10 83
OF SPIRITUAL JOY 83
Chapter 11 91
OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY OF MIND 91
Chapter 12 96
OF CONTENTMENT OF MIND 96
Chapter 13 104
OF THANKFULNESS TO GOD 104
Chapter 14 111
OF HUMILITY 111
Chapter 15 115
OF SELF-DENIAL 115
Chapter 16 120
OF RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD 120

Chapter 17 125
OF PATIENCE 125
Chapter 18 129
OF CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE 129
Chapter 19 134
OF ZEAL 134
Chapter 20 139
OF WISDOM OR PRUDENCE 139
Chapter 21 143
OF GODLY SINCERITY 143
Chapter 22 148
OF SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS 148
Chapter 23 152
OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE 152
Chapter 24 156
OF COMMUNION WITH GOD 156

BOOK II

Of External Worship, As Public.

Chapter 1 162
OF THE NATURE OF A GOSPEL CHURCH, THE SEAT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP 162
Chapter 2 168
OF THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBER OF A CHURCH TO EACH OTHER 168
Chapter 3 172
OF THE OFFICERS OF A CHURCH, PARTICULARLY PASTORS 172
Chapter 4 186
OF THE DUTIES OF MEMBERS OF CHURCHES TO THEIR PASTORS 186
Chapter 5 191
OF THE OFFICE OF DEACONS 191
Chapter 6 196
OF THE DISCIPLINE OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST 196

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

The Parousia 205
The Bierton Crisis 206
Mr Clarke from Bierton 207

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BOOK I

OF THE WORSHIP OF GOD, OR PRACTICAL RELIGION

CHAPTER I

OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

Or Practical Religion

Chapter 1

OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

I have, in the former part of this work, proved there is a God, from the light of nature and reason, from the works of creation, &c. and now my business is to show that this God is to be worshipped; I have treated of the nature, perfections, and attributes of God, which are the foundation of the worship of him; and now I shall treat of worship itself. I have considered the various works of God, the works of creation, providence, and grace; and these may be used as so many arguments to engage us to divine worship, or as so many reasons why we should glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are his; or, in other words, worship him both internally and externally; and I shall begin with the object of worship, for which we have a plain direction, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). Two things are to be observed and considered (1) That the Lord God is the object of worship. (2) That he alone is the object of worship, to the exclusion of all others.

1. The object of worship is the Lord God, God essentially and personally considered.

First, God essentially considered, or as considered in his nature and essence, which is the foundation of worship. Many are the directions and instructions given to "worship God", without specifying any of the persons in the Deity particularly to be worshipped; (see Rev. 14:7; 19:10; 22:9). The "Lord" is to be worshipped; the Lord, who is the one Jehovah, and whose name alone is Jehovah (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 83:18). The word "Lord" in the New Testament answers to "Jehovah" in the Old, a name expressive of the existence or being of God, and of him as the fountain of being, and the author of being to all others; who is the everlasting "I am, which is, and which was, and which is to come"; these words of John are a proper deciphering of the word "Jehovah", or the "I am that I am" in (Ex. 3:14). Now he whose essence is simple, uncompounded, immutable, infinite, eternal, &c. is to be worshipped, even the Lord "thy" God, thy Creator, thy Benefactor, thy Supporter, and Preserver. Thus the apostle describes the proper object of worship unknown to the Athenians, as he who made the world, and all things in it; and gives life, and breath, and all things to his creatures; and in whom they live, move, and have their being (Acts 17:23, 25, 28). Thus Jacob invoked God, which to do is a part of religious worship, who had "fed" him "all" his "life long to that day" (Gen. 48:15). David says, his prayer, which is a part of worship, should be to the "God of his life", who had given him life and upheld him in it (Ps. 42:8), he who is the "true God", the "living God", and the "everlasting King", is the object of worship; the true God, in distinction from nominal gods, from such who are falsely so called; the living God, in distinction from idols of gold and silver, the work of men's hands, lifeless statues, in whom there is no breath; but the true God, and who is to be worshipped, has life in and of himself, originally and underivatively, and is the fountain and giver of life to others, and from everlasting to everlasting he is God. He is by nature God; there are some who are not so, and therefore not to be served and worshipped (Gal. 4:8), but God is a spirit, is of a spiritual nature, and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; his nature is most perfect, has all perfections in it, though there is no finding him out unto perfection; his nature is infinite and incomprehensible, beyond all conception and thought, beyond all words and expressions, exalted above all blessing and praise. The name of God, the very first name by which he is called in scripture, "Elohim" (Gen. 1:1), implies worship, and that he is to be worshipped who created the heavens and the earth, for it comes from a word (See the Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book 1, Chapter 3) which signifies to worship. And to this the apostle seems to allude when he says that antichrist exalts himself "above that is called God", or "that is worshipped", intimating that the name of God signifies sebasma,

the object of worship (2 Thess. 2:4).

Secondly, God personally considered, or God considered in the three persons, is the object of worship. "The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one", are one God, and so equally the object of divine worship.

1*st*, The Father, of whom Christ expressly says, that men shall "worship the Father" (John 4:21, 23), and of the propriety of this there can be no doubt, since his Deity is not denied by any, and was it, they would easily be confronted; he is expressly called "God the Father" (Phil. 2:11), and sometimes "God even the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Cor. 1:3), all the perfections of Deity are attributed to him, as immutability, eternity, &c. and the works of creation, providence, and grace; and he has undoubtedly a proper claim of worship from his creatures, and accordingly worship is given to him, and acts of it are exercised on him. Baptism, which is a solemn act of religious worship under the New Testament dispensation, is administered in his name; and his name stands first in the form of it, baptizing in the name of the Father", &c. which signifies not only its being done by his authority and command, but the persons, by submission to it, devote themselves to him, profess to be his, and lay themselves hereby under an obligation to serve him; and because to do this in the name of a creature would be idolatry and irreligion, the apostle Paul was thankful that he had baptized no more of the Corinthians than he had, when he found they were for setting him up as the head of a party among them, lest they should think they were baptized in his name. Prayer is another part of divine and religious worship, which is made to the Father, and indeed is generally made to him; the access and address are most frequently to him, not but that they may be equally made to the other two persons, as will be presently seen; but the reason why they are usually to him is because he bears no office, whereas the others do, and an office which is concerned in the business of prayer. Christ is the mediator through whom the access is, and in whose name the petition is put up; and the Spirit is the spirit of supplication, by whose aid and assistance prayer is made: the whole of this may be observed in one passage; for "through him", through Christ the mediator, "we both", Jews and Gentiles, "have an access" at the throne of grace "by one spirit", who helps and assists us in our supplications "unto the Father", the Father of Christ and of us (Eph. 2:18), see an instance of a large prayer of the apostles to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in (Eph. 3:14-21), and it is easy to observe, that at the beginning of many of the epistles such a prayer or wish is made, as "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father", as distinguished from the Lord Jesus Christ; which is a petition for grace, an increase of grace, and all necessary supplies of it, and for all spiritual prosperity and happiness. Thanksgiving, another act of religious worship, which is sometimes included in prayer, and sometimes performed as a distinct part of worship, is made to the Father. "Giving thanks always for all things" for all temporal and spiritual blessings, "unto God and the Father", the Father of Christ and of us in him, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). Acts of faith, hope, and love, which are acts of worship, are exercised on him; "ye believe in God", that is, in God the Father (John 14:1), who raised Christ from the dead; that "the faith and hope" of saints "might be in God" the Father, who raised him from thence (1 Pet. 1:21), and where those graces are love is, and is exercised on the same object; and as the Father was the object of Christ's love as man and mediator, so he is the object of the love of those that believe in him (John 14:31).

Secondly, the Word, or Son of God, is also the object of worship; "he is thy Lord, and worship thou him" (Ps. 45:11), yea, he is to be worshipped with the same sort of worship, and to be honored with the same degree of honour the Father is (John 5:23), for he is the Lord, the Jehovah, thy God, as Thomas said, "My Lord, and my God"; the mighty God, the great God, God over the true God and eternal life; who has the same perfections his Father has; and the same works his Father does are done by him (Col. 2:9; John 5:19), and therefore to be worshipped with the same worship, and so he is. Baptism is administered in his name equally as in the Father's "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son", &c. and sometimes his name only is mentioned (Acts 10:48; 19:5). Prayer, which is an act of worship, is made to him; it is said, "prayer shall be made for him continually"; it may as well be rendered, as some think, "prayer shall be made to him continually" (Ps. 72:15). Invocation of his name, which is a part of religious worship, is spoken of him; his disciples and followers are sometimes

described by those that "called upon his name" (Acts 9:14; 1 Cor. 1:2) and it may be observed, that in the beginning of many epistles before referred to, the same prayer or wish for grace and peace to the saints, is made to Christ as to God the Father; Stephen, the proto-martyr, when expiring, called upon God, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59), to which may be added the doxologies or ascriptions of glory, which are high acts of worship, are sometimes made to Christ separately (2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev. 1:5, 6). Also the acts of faith, hope, and love, are exercised on him as on God the Father; "Ye believe in God" the Father, says Christ, "believe also in me" (John 14:1). Trust and confidence are not to be put in a creature, for "cursed be the man that trusteth in man" (Jer. 17:5). Christ is the object of the hope and love of his people, and as such is often represented (1 Tim. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:8), in whom they hope for happiness, and who have an affectionate devotion for him. And it is easy to give instances of adoration which have been made unto him; thus he was worshipped by Jacob, when he invoked him to bless the sons of Joseph, saying, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads" (Gen. 48:16). By the angel cannot be meant God the Father, for he is never called an angel; nor any created angel, whom Jacob would never have invoked; but the uncreated angel, Christ, the Angel of the covenant, his Redeemer from all evil. He was also worshipped by Joshua, who appeared to him, and made himself known to him as "the captain of the host of the Lord, who is the leader and commander of the people, the captain of our salvation"; upon which notice, "Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship", for which he was not reproved, nay, encouraged, yea was further ordered to "loose his shoe from off his foot", for it is said "the place whereon thou standest is holy, and Joshua did so"; which was never ordered to be done, but where God himself was, whose presence gave a relative holiness to the place where he appeared (Joshua 5:13-15). Christ was also worshipped by the wise men who came from the east to seek him and see him; and so by others in the days of his flesh, and by his disciples when he parted from them and went up to heaven; yea he has been worshipped not only by men but by angels, and that by a divine order, "Let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6). The first begotten; the same with the only begotten Son of God, who is God; or otherwise it would be a piece of idolatry to worship him; and we have an instance of many angels with others paying their adoration to him (Rev. 5:12, 13).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is also the object of worship equally with the Father and the Son. He is with them the one God. He is possessed of all divine perfections, such as eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, &c. he was concerned in creation, and is in the government of the world, and in the operations of grace (Ps. 33:6; Isa. 40:13, 14; 1 Cor. 12:4-11), and so worthy of worship, and it is given unto him. Baptism is administered in his name, equally as in the name of the Father and of the Son (Matthew 28:19). Prayer is made unto him; not only is he the Spirit of grace and of supplication, and who helps the saints under their infirmities in prayer, but he is prayed unto; "the Lord", that is, the Lord the Spirit, "direct your hearts", &c. where all the three persons are mentioned as distinct (2 Thess. 3:5), so grace and peace, as they are wished and prayed for from God and Christ, so "from the Seven Spirits which are before the throne"; by which are meant the one Spirit of God so called, because of the fulness of divine perfections in him, and because of the perfection of his gifts and graces (Rev. 1:4, 5). Moreover his graces wrought in the saints, as they come from him, they are exercised on him, as faith, trust, and an holy confidence in him, that he who has begun the good work in them will finish it; and there is also the love of the Spirit, a cordial love of him, and a carefulness not to grieve him by whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption.

II. God only is the object of worship, to the exclusion of all others.

1*st*, all idols of whatsoever kind are excluded, not only images of things in heaven or in earth, or in the sea, and the idols of gold and silver, the work of men's hands, forbidden by the second command; but also the idols set up in a man's heart, to which such respect is paid as is due to God only; of such may be read in Ezekiel 14:4 and which God promises to cleanse his people from by his Spirit and grace (Ezek. 36:25), and which when converted they declare they will have no more to do with, in the manner they have, who before conversion served divers lusts and pleasures (Hosea 14:8; Titus 3:3), and these perhaps are the idols the apostle John warns the children of God to keep

themselves from (1 John 5:21). The idol the worldling is enamoured with, and in which he places his trust and confidence, is gold and silver; hence covetousness is called idolatry, and such a man is said to be an idolater (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5), nor can the true God and this idol mammon be served and worshipped by the same (Matthew 6:24). The epicure, or voluptuous person, his god is his belly, which he serves, and in which he places all his happiness, and cannot be said to serve the Lord and worship him (Phil. 3:19; Rom. 16:18). The self-righteous man makes an idol of his righteousness, he sets it up and endeavors to make it stand, and to establish it, and then falls down to it and worships it, putting his trust and confidence in it (Luke 18:9).

2*ndly*, every creature in the heavens, or on the earth, are excluded from divine worship. As the sun, moon, and stars; these seem to be the first objects of worship among the idolatrous heathens; and indeed when men departed from the true God what could they think of to place in his room but those glorious creatures so visible to them, from whom they received light and heat, and many blessings? hence the Israelites were cautioned against lifting up their eyes unto them, and gazing on them, lest they should be ensnared into the worship of them (Deut. 4:19. The next objects of idolatrous worship were men, heroes and mighty kings, famous for their exploits; these are the gods many and the lords many, the Baalim often spoken of in scripture, as Baalpeor, Baalberith, &c. Neither good nor bad men are to be worshipped; when an attempt was made to sacrifice to the apostles, they rejected it with the greatest vehemence and abhorrence (Acts 14:1-28), and it is the height of iniquity and blasphemy in antichrist to suffer himself to be worshipped, yea, to command it; and a damnable sin in his followers to do it (Rev. 13:4, 8, 15; 14:9-11). Yea, angels are excluded from divine worship; this sort of idolatry was introduced in the times of the apostles, but condemned (Col. 2:18), and rejected by angels themselves (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). And much less are devils to be worshipped; and yet the worship of such has obtained among the blind and ignorant heathens, as in the East and West Indies; and even the sacrifices of the Jews to new gods their fathers knew not, and the sacrifices of the heathens are said to be offered to devils, and not to God; yea the worship of saints departed by the Papists, as the doctrine of it is called the doctrine of devils, so the practice is represented as if it was no other than worshipping of devils; it being contrary to the worship of the true God, who only is to be worshipped (Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 9:20).

Chapter 2

OF INTERNAL WORSHIP

And Of Godliness The Groundwork Of It.

Having considered the object of worship, worship itself is next to be treated of; and which is either internal or external: internal worship requires our first attention, it being of the greatest moment and importance; external worship profits little in comparison of that; if the heart is not engaged in worship, bodily exercise is of little advantage, that being only the form without the power of godliness; yea vain is such worship where the heart is far removed from God. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped with our spirits, the better and more noble part of man; if we serve his law, it should be with our mind, the inward man delighting in it; obedience to it should flow from a principle of love to God in the heart, and with a view to his glory; and if we serve him in the gospel of his Son, it should be with our spirits, with a fervent affection for it; if we pray to him it should be with the spirit and the understanding also; if we sing his praise, it should be with melody in our hearts to the Lord; herein lies powerful godliness; and godliness is the ground work of internal worship, and without which there can be no worshipping God aright, [1] and therefore it deserves our first consideration. Godliness is sometimes used for evangelic doctrine, the doctrine that is according to godliness, and productive of it; the whole mystery of godliness, respecting the person, office, and grace of Christ, and salvation by him, which the apostle exhorts Timothy to exercise himself in, in opposition to fables, and vain and trifling things, of no moment (1 Tim 4:7). Sometimes it signifies a holy life and conversation, under the influence and power of the grace of God, as in (2 Pet. 3:11). “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” Sometimes it intends some particular duty of religion, or rather some particular grace, “Add--

to patience, godliness, to godliness, brotherly love", that is, exercise these (2 Pet. 1:5-7). But in the subject I am upon I consider it as an assemblage of graces, as containing the whole of grace in the heart, the exercise of which is necessary to serve and worship God with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28), and without this there can be no internal worship of God. This is no other than the inward devotion of the mind, a fervency of spirit in serving the Lord; it is a holy disposition of the soul towards God. This is theosebeia, the true worship of God (1 Tim. 2:10), the ground and foundation of it, without which there can be none. This is "life and godliness", or vital powerful godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and "the things pertaining" to it are faith, hope, love, and every other grace, of which it consists, and in the exercise of which it lies, and in this is all internal religion and worship..

First, such a gracious disposition Godward is not to be found in unregenerate men, only in such who are truly partakers of the grace of God. It is godliness which distinguishes between one who truly serves and worships God, and one that serves and worships him not. The one as he is denominated from it a godly man, so likewise theosebe, a true worshipper of God (John 9:31), the other, as from the want of it, he is called an ungodly man, so asebes, one that is without the worship of God (1 Pet. 4:18).

1*st,* such a gracious disposition of the mind towards God, which is requisite to the service and worship of him, is not to be found in unregenerate men; their character is this, that they are "after the flesh", or are carnal men; and only "mind the things of the flesh", carnal things, fleshly lusts, &c. (Rom. 8:5), there is no disposition in their minds towards God and his worship; they savour not the things of God, but the things which be of men; and therefore having no inward disposition Godward, they are truly reckoned ungodly men, and destitute of the worship of him.

2*dly*, such a gracious disposition towards God and his service, which is rightly called "godliness", is only to be found in such who are partakers of the grace of God in truth; for,

1. Their character is, that they are "after the Spirit", or are spiritual men; they are born of the Spirit and his grace, and so are spirit or spiritual, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and in whom grace is the governing principle; though they are not without flesh, and have much carnality in them, yet being renewed in their minds, their conversations are spiritual; they walk after and live in the Spirit. Hence,

2. They mind "the things of the Spirit", they love spiritual doctrines, desire spiritual gifts, especially an increase of spiritual grace, and a clearer view of interest in all spiritual blessings; they savour the things of God, and of the Spirit of God; they have a gust for them, a relish of them, they are sweet unto them, their taste being changed. Wherefore,

3. The disposition of their souls is Godward, and to his service; they have an understanding of him, and desire to know more of him, and follow on to know him the use of means; their thoughts are employed about him, they think on his name, his nature, and perfections, and lovingkindness, as displayed in Christ; their affections are set upon him, and they love him cordially and sincerely; their desires are after him, and to the remembrance of his name; they pant after more communion with him, and the manifestations of his love unto them; they have their spiritual senses exercised upon him; they see him with the eyes of their understandings opened, his beauty, his power, and his glory, in the sanctuary; they hear his gospel with pleasure, it is a joyful sound unto them, and they can distinguish his voice from that of a stranger; they taste that the Lord is gracious; his word and the doctrines of it, his fruit and the blessings of his grace are sweet to their taste, these are savoury things which their souls love; they handle Christ the word of life, and feel the power of his gospel on them; that effectually working in them through the demonstration of the spirit. Now,

4. These are truly godly persons, eusebeis (2 Pet. 2:9), persons well disposed to the worship of God, and who rightly perform it; these have their minds powerfully impressed with the doctrine that is according to godliness, under the influence of which they live soberly, righteously, and godly; these have all things given them pertaining to life and godliness, every grace, and every needful supply and increase of it; in the exercise of which lies internal worship, or inward, spiritual, experimental, and practical religion; which is called eusebeia, or "godliness", and stands opposed to bodily exercise, or external worship (1 Tim. 4:8).

Secondly, godliness not in name and profession only, but godliness in the life and power of it, an inward

fervent devotion of the mind, a gracious disposition of the heart towards God, as hits been explained, is the ground work of true religion; and without this there can be no internal worship, nor indeed any external worship rightly performed; for,

1. Without the knowledge of God there can be no true worship of him; the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what, and so their worship [2] was not right. Whom the Athenians ignorantly worshipped, him the apostle declared unto them; nor is a natural knowledge of God by the creatures sufficient to teach men the worship of God and engage them in it; the wise philosophers, who, by the light of nature, by the works of creation, knew there was a God, yet they glorified him not as God. True spiritual, experimental, and evangelical knowledge of God, is the knowledge of God in Christ; and as our worship of him is in and by Christ, there can be no true worship of him without such knowledge of him, even of him as our covenant God in Christ; and as this will direct us to the right object of worship, and the true manner of worship, so it will influence and engage unto it; "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23).

2. Without faith in God, which is another branch of powerful godliness, there can be no true worship of God; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without it, it is impossible to please God m any part of worship and service; all worship performed to God under the Old Testament dispensation which was agreeable to him, was by faith, as the instances of Abel and Jacob, of Moses and the children of Israel show (Heb. 11:4, 5, 21, 28). And under the gospel dispensation, whenever we draw nigh to God in any part of worship, it must be in faith; whoever comes to God, and is a worshipper of him, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; and if we come to the throne of grace and there ask anything of God, it must be asked in faith; and if we attend upon him in the ministry of the word, it must be in the exercise of faith, for the word only profits as it is mixed with faith by them that hear it (Heb. 10:22; 4:12), now faith is one of the things pertaining to life and godliness, and is a part of it; and therefore without godliness, or a gracious disposition of the soul towards God, there can be no true worship of him.

3. Without the fear of God, another branch of vital godliness, there can be no worship of him. The fear of God is sometimes put for tile whole of worship, both internal and external, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints", where his solemn worship is performed, "and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him"; and fear and reverence are so necessary to the service and worship of God, that the Psalmist exhorts men to "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling"; and as for himself, he says, "in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple"; (see Ps 89:7; 2:11; 5:7), where there is no fear of God before the eyes and upon the hearts of men, there is no worship of him; grace in the heart, and that in exercise, or inward powerful godliness, which is the same thing, is absolutely necessary to worship God in an acceptable manner (Heb. 12:28).

4. Spiritual internal worship cannot be performed without love to God, another branch of real godliness. Charity, or love, is the internal principle from whence obedience to God, and the worship of him, should spring; hence love to God with all the heart and soul, as well as fear, is premised unto it (Deut. 10:12), for such affectionate, cordial, and hearty service is only acceptable to him, and can never be where the heart is destitute of godliness.

5. And as they are spiritual worshippers that God seeks, and spiritual worship that is only acceptable to him, it being suitable to his nature who is a spirit; none but a spiritual man can perform it, or that is possessed of true grace, or vital godliness; they that are in the flesh, in a state of nature, carnal men, who have no disposition Godward, cannot please God, or do that which is acceptable in his sight (Rom. 8:8).

6. Nor can a man worship God sincerely, if he has only the form and not the power of godliness; if he only draws nigh to God with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, and his heart is removed far from him, and his fear towards him taught by the precept of men, his worship will be in vain and unacceptable to him (Isa. 29:13), from all which it appears how necessary godliness is to the worship of God, and that it may well be reckoned the groundwork and foundation of it.

Now this gracious disposition of the mind Godward, which may therefore be truly called godliness, and which is so necessary to the worship of God, that it cannot be performed without it, is not of a

man's self, it is not naturally in man; yea, as has been seen, the bias and disposition of the minds of men are naturally the reverse; wherefore this disposition must be owing to the grace of God, and must be a gift of his; it is he that gives godliness itself, and all things appertaining to it; and indeed as it is an assemblage of all the graces of the Spirit, and every grace is a gift, that must be such. Knowledge of God is a gift of his; faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Hope that is good, is a good hope through grace; love cannot be purchased at any rate; the fear of God is what is implanted in the heart by the grace of God, and so all others; and even all supplies of grace to maintain, encourage, increase, and support such a disposition, are freely given of God; and all grace, as it comes from God, it points to God again, and disposes the heart Godward.

Thirdly, great is the profit, arid many the advantages, that accrue from godliness to the possessors of it.

1*st*, that itself is said to be gain to the persons that have it; "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6), there were some indeed who "supposed that gain is godliness" (1 Tim.6:5), either who thought that godliness was to be gained with money, as Simon Magus thought the gifts of the Holy Ghost were; but as not they, so neither the graces of the Spirit are to be obtained in such a way: or they were such who took up a profession of godliness, and made an outward show of it, for the sake of present or future gain; to gain a name in a church of Christ, to get a reputation among godly neighbours and acquaintance, and for the sake of worldly interest in godly wealthy relations, or to obtain the favour of God now, and heaven hereafter; but after all, what will be the hope and gain of such a person when "God takes away his soul?" (Job 27:8), or they are such who think, or at least act as if they thought, that all religion lay in gain, in getting money; since their serving God and Christ, and all they do in a religious way, is for filthy lucre's sake, every one looking for his gain from his quarter. But real godliness is itself true gain; it may be said of it as it is of wisdom, "the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold" (Prov. 3:14). Such who, while in a state of ungodliness, were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked", being possessed of godliness, come into good circumstances; who before were in debt, owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay, and were liable to a prison, all their debts are freely forgiven them, and the whole score of them cleared; who before were in rags, and had nothing to cover their naked souls before God, are now clothed with change of raiment, with a robe of righteousness and garments of salvation; who before were starving, and would have been glad of husks which swine do eat, are now fed with the finest of the wheat, with angels' food, at Christ's table, as with marrow and fatness; these are come into very affluent circumstances, to great riches, durable and unsearchable; and to great honour also, being raised as beggars from the dunghill, to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory; yea are made kings and priests unto God, have a kingdom of grace now, and are heirs of the kingdom of glory; they who lived without God in the world, and were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, are now in a good family, fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and being children of God are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, possessed of the riches of grace, and entitled to the riches of glory; their gain is great indeed, and sufficient to give them full contentment.

2dly, godliness is said to be "profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. 4:8), whereas bodily exercise, or a presentation of the body only in an attendance of public worship, "profiteth little", or "for a little time;" [3] for sometimes such sort of religion and worship lasts but for a little while, as in temporary believers, and in the stony ground hearers, and where it continues, it profits not in matters of the greatest importance; it may be profitable to others, by way of example, as to children and servants in a man's family, and to a community with whom he attends for the secular support of it; and it may be profitable to himself, to keep him from being elsewhere, in bad company, which might lead into many snares and temptations, and hurtful lusts; but is of no profit to obtain eternal life, since a man may constantly hear the word, and attend on and submit unto all ordinances, and yet Christ may say to him at the last day, "Depart from me, I know you not"; for there may be such bodily exercise or external worship, where there is no true grace nor vital religion: but "godliness", powerful vital godliness, internal religion, is "profitable unto all things"; it is even profitable to the health of a man's body, for the fear of the Lord, which is the same thing, is "health to the navel", and "marrow to the bones"; whereas by

an ungodly course of life men bring upon themselves diseases painful and incurable; but more especially godliness is profitable to promote the welfare of the soul; for by means of that, and in the exercise of it, the soul of a good man, as of Gaius, prospers and is in good health; he finds it always good for him to draw nigh unto God, where he has much communion with him, and receives much from him: and such a man is profitable to others, for godly men are made a blessing to all about them, they are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; though indeed no man can be profitable to God by all his external and internal religion, as he that is wise and good may be profitable to himself and others; for when he has done all he can, or by the grace of God is assisted to do, he is but an unprofitable servant.

3*dly*, godliness has "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

1. Of the present life, both temporal and spiritual. A godly man has the promise of temporal life, of the blessings of it, of good things in it, yea that he shall want no good thing that is needful for him; and of a continuance of this life, when an ungodly man does not live out half his days; God satisfies the godly man with long life, and shows him his salvation (Ps. 34:9, 10; 37:3; 84:11; 91:16), and of the present spiritual life, of all things pertaining to it, of all needful supplies of grace to maintain and support it, and of the continuance of it, and of its springing up into and issuing in everlasting life.

2. Of the future life of happiness and glory. It is most certain that there is a future life, and that there is a promise of eternal life in it, made by God who cannot lie; this promise is made to the godly man (Jam. 1:12), not to be enjoyed by him through any merit of his, for that is the gift of God through Christ; and a promise being made of it, and its being by promise, show that it is not of the works of men but of the grace of God; and when godliness is said to have the promise of it, it is a promise God has made to his own grace, and not to the merits of men. However, it is a plain case, that real godliness is of great avail to men, both with respect to time and eternity.

Now as inward powerful godliness is, as has been seen, a disposition of the soul Godward, from whom all grace comes and to whom it tends, and as it is an assemblage of every grace, [4] in the exercise of which all internal worship and experimental religion lies, I therefore begin with it, and shall in the following chapters consider the branches of it in which it opens; as the knowledge of God, repentance towards God, fear of him, faith and trust in him, the hope of things from him, love to him, joy in him, humility, self-denial, patience, submission, and resignation to the will of God, thankfulness for every mercy, with every other grace necessary to the worship of God, and which belongs to experimental religion and godliness.

---

[1] osiostes kai eusebeia (therapeia) theon, Platonis Euthyphro, p. 9.

[2] eusebes de o ten theian epistemen echon, Hierocles in Carmin, Pythag. p. 26. einai te ten eusebeian epistemen theon therapeias, Laert. l. 7. in Vita Zenonis.

[3] pros to olinon.

[4] eusebeia, frequently used in scripture, and rendered godliness, is in heathen writers said to be egemon arche kai meter, "the leader, the beginning and mother of all virtues"; kai sperma ton agathon apanton emin, "and the seed of all good things in us", Hierocles in Carmin. Pythagor. p. 10. 69. 126.

Chapter 3

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Since the knowledge of God and of divine things is a part and branch of true godliness, or of experimental religion, and a very essential one too, it is first to be considered; for without it there can be no good disposition in the mind towards God; for "ignoti nulla cupido", there are no affections for nor desires after an unknown object. And as we have seen there can be no true worship of God where there is no knowledge of God, as the cases of the Samaritans among the Jews, the Athenians among the Gentiles, and their wise philosophers show; there can be no cordial obedience to him by those who are ignorant of him; the language of such persons will be like that of Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2). It is a false maxim of the Papists, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion;" it is so far from being true, that it is the parent of irreligion, will worship, superstition, and idolatry. Godliness, as has been observed, is an assemblage of the graces of the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people, in the exercise

of which experimental religion or internal worship lies; now there can be no grace without knowledge, no faith without it; the object must be known, or it cannot be rightly believed in. The blind man's answer to Christ's question is a wise one (John 9:35, 36). The Gentiles, who are described as such who "know not God", are also said to be "without hope", without hope and without God in the world; without hope in God and of good things from him now, and without hope of the resurrection of the dead, a future state, and enjoyment of happiness in it (1 Thess. 4:5, 13), an unknown object cannot be the object of love; an unseen person may, "Whom having not seen, we love"; but an unknown person cannot be truly and cordially loved; God must be known, or he cannot be loved with all the heart and with all the soul. The wise man says (Prov. 19:2). "That the soul be without knowledge is not good", or rather it may be rendered, "without knowledge the soul is disposed to that which is not good; [5] it cannot be well disposed towards God, nor be fit for any good work, or for the right performance of any religious exercise, but is disposed to that which is evil; where ignorance reigns no good thing dwells. Now,

First, let it be observed, that while men are in a natural, unregenerate, and unrenewed state, they are destitute of divine knowledge; the time before conversion is a time of ignorance; this was not only the case of the Gentile world in general, before the gospel came unto them, but is of every particular person, Jew or Gentile (Acts 17:30; 1 Pet. 1:14), all the sons and daughters of Adam are in the same circumstances, for the illustration of which it may be noted,

1*st*, that Adam was created a very knowing creature, being made after the image and in the likeness of God, which greatly lay in his understanding and knowledge of things; and while he continued in a state of innocence his knowledge was very great; it is not easy to say not to conceive how great it was; as he knew much of things natural and civil, so of things moral and divine; as he knew much of the creatures and their nature, so as to give suitable names to them, he knew much of God, of his nature, perfections, and persons, and of his mind and will, and of all necessary truths and duties of religion; for what by the light of nature and the works of it, and by the exercise of his own rational powers, which were in their full force and vigor, and by that nearness to God and communion with him he had, and by those revelations which were made to him by God, his knowledge must be very great. But,

2*dly*, our first parents not being content with the knowledge they had, but listening to the temptation of Satan, who suggested to them that if they eat of the forbidden fruit they should be wise and knowing as God, they sinned and fell in with it, and fell by it, and so lost in a great measure that knowledge they had; for "man being in honour", as he was while in state of innocence, and "understandeth not", so he became by sinning, "is like the beasts that perish"; not only like to them, being through sin become mortal as they are, but because of want of understanding; yet "vain man would be wise", would be thought to be a wise and a very knowing creature, "though man be born like a wild ass's colt", which of all animals is the most dull and stupid; (see Ps. 49:12, 20; Job 11:12).

3*dly*, Adam being driven from the presence of God, and deprived of communion with him because of sin, by which his nature was corrupted, darkness seized his understanding and overspread it, and greatly dispelled that light which before shone so brightly in him; and this is the case of all his posterity (Eph. 4:18). The darkness of sin has blinded the eyes of their understanding, that they cannot see and understand divine things; it has left an ignorance of God in them, to which are owing their want of a disposition to God, an alienation from him, and an aversion to a life agreeable to him; and this is the state and case of all men, even of God's elect before conversion, who are not only dark but "darkness" itself, till they are made light in the Lord; and when the true light of grace shines, the darkness passes away (Eph. 5:8; 1 John 2:8).

4*thly*, this darkness and ignorance are increased by a course of sinning. Naturally man "is in darkness", he is born in darkness and continues in it, "and walketh in darkness"; and by an habit and custom in sinning increases the darkness of his mind; for notwithstanding the fall there are some remains of the light of nature in man; some general notions of good and evil, according to which the natural conscience accuses or excuses; but sometimes through a course of sin conscience is cauterized, seared as with a red hot iron, so that it is become past feeling, and insensible

to the distinction of good and evil (Isa. 5:20).

5*thly*, there is in many an affected ignorance, which is very criminal; they are "willingly ignorant", as the apostle says of the scoffers who shall arise in the last time, or rather they are unwilling to understand what they might, "they know not, nor will they understand, they walk on in darkness"; they do not choose to make use of but shun the means of knowledge, and shut their eyes against all light and conviction; they do not care to come to the light, and love darkness rather than light; they do not desire to know God and his ways, but rather that he would depart from them; with such as these wisdom expostulates, saying, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?--and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. 1:21; 2 Pet. 3:5; Ps. 82:5; John 3:19; Job 21:14).

6*thly,* Some, because of their sinful lusts they indulge themselves in, and their contempt of the means of light and knowledge, and the stubborn choice they make of error and falsehood, are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart; as many among the heathens, who because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, were given up to a reprobate mind, or to a mind void of judgment, and so imbibed notions and performed actions not convenient (Rom. 1:28), and the Jews, who rejected Jesus the Messiah against all light and evidence, had a spirit of slumber given them, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, nor understand with their hearts (John 12:40; Rom. 11:8), and the followers of Antichrist, who received not the love of the truth, had a strong delusion sent them to believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:10,11), others have been left under the power of Satan, the same with the power of darkness, who is the god of this world, and who is suffered to blind the eyes of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:4).

Now while men are in an unrenewed state, and in such a state of darkness and blindness, they are ignorant,

1. Of God, of his nature and perfections; for though they may by the light of nature, and from the works of creation, know that there is a God, and some of his perfections, as his wisdom, power, and goodness, which manifestly appear in them; yet not so as to glorify him as God, nor so as to preserve them from the worship of other gods besides him: indeed their knowledge of him is so dim and obscure, that after all they are said by their wisdom not to know God, the true God, this was the case of the Gentiles; and as for the Jews who had a revelation, yet they were "ignorant of the righteousness of God", which was the ground of their capital mistake in going about to establish their own righteousness and reject the righteousness of Christ. And carnal men are very apt to think that God is such an one as themselves, and they measure him by themselves, and fancy that what is agreeable to the reasonings of their minds is approved of by him; or that he takes no notice of men and their actions, but leaves them to act as they please; that "the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (Ezek. 9:9), and thus they live without God, or as atheists in the world; or they think that God is a God of mercy, and will have mercy on them at last, but never think of his justice and holiness.

2. They are ignorant of Christ, of his person and offices, and of the way of life and salvation by him; as they know neither the Father nor the Son, nor the distinction between them, so not the concern that each have in the salvation of men. "The way of peace they know not", how God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, forming the plan and scheme of reconciliation, and how Christ has made peace by the blood of his cross.

3. They are ignorant of the Spirit of God; "The world seeth him not, neither knoweth him" (John 14:17), neither his person nor his office, as a sanctifier and comforter; not the operations of his grace on the souls of men; Nicodemus, a master in Israel, could not conceive how it should be that a man should be born again of water and of the Spirit (John 3:8, 9). Nor can a natural man either receive or know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned, and he has not a spiritual visive faculty to discern them (1 Cor. 2:14).

4. They are ignorant of themselves, and of their state and condition by nature; they think themselves rich and increased with goods, when they are wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked; they fancy themselves whole, sound and healthful, and need not a physician for their souls, when they are sadly diseased and distempered with sin; they reckon themselves alive without the law, in a good condition,

and in a fair way for life, heaven, and happiness, till the law enters them, and cuts off all their hopes of salvation by the works of it. They are upon the brink of ruin, like a man on the top of the mast of a ship asleep, or in the midst of the sea, insensible of their danger; they rush into sin like the horse into the battle, and hasten like a bird to the snare, which knows not it is for its life.

5. They are ignorant of sin and the sad effects of it; if they have any notion of the grosser sins of life, and the evil of them, they do not know that lust in the heart is sin; not the evil of indwelling sin and corrupt nature; nor consider that the wages of sin is death, eternal death; they are not sensible of their own insufficiency and inability to make atonement for their sins, nor to work out a righteousness that will justify them from their sins.

6. They are ignorant of the sacred scriptures, and the truths contained in them; though they are plain to them that understand, and right to them that find knowledge (Prov. 8:9), yet they are like a sealed book to carnal men, whether learned or unlearned; the one cannot read them because sealed, and the other because he is not learned (Isa. 29:11, 12). The mysteries of the kingdom are delivered to them in parables, and they are riddles, enigmas, and dark saying to them; the gospel, and the doctrines of it, are hid from the wise and prudent; they cannot understand them, they are foolishness to them, and they pronounce them such. But,

Secondly, in every renewed person there is a knowledge of God and of divine things; the new creature or "new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Spiritual and divine knowledge is a part of the new man, which is no other than an assemblage of grace consisting of various members, of which this is one; it is a part of the image of God and Christ enstamped upon the soul in regeneration, and which gives it a disposition godward; concerning which may be observed,

1*st*, the object of it, God; before conversion men know not God, but after that they know him, or rather are known of him (Gal. 4:8, 9), there is a threefold knowledge of God, or a knowledge of God that is come at in a threefold way.

1. There is a knowledge of God by the light of nature through the works of creation, which show his eternal power and Godhead, declare his glory, and display his wisdom and goodness; and through the works of providence, by which he has not left himself without a witness of his Being and beneficence; and though these ways and works are past finding out, and a small portion of them is known by men, yet something of God is to be known by them, and that he is, as Jethro said, "greater than all gods"; but then such knowledge was always insufficient to teach men the true worship of God, and influence them to it; notwithstanding this, either they did not worship him at all, or ignorantly worshipped him; that is, not in a right way and manner; the wise philosophers of the heathens, though they in some sort knew God, yet they did not glorify him as God, nor serve him only, but worshipped and served the creature more and beside the Creator; nor was such knowledge effectual to make the hearts of men better, nor to mend their lives; those to whom God left not himself without a witness, by the works of creation and providence, still walked on in their own ways, and those very bad ones, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, drunkenness, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, even committing abominable lewdness in their religious services. What a character does the apostle give of them (Rom. 1:18-32), even of those who professed themselves to be wise, both as to their hearts and actions? their foolish heart was darkened and their imagination vain, and they were given up to the lusts of their hearts and to the uncleanness of them, to vile affections and a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness and wickedness; what a dreadful portrait does the apostle draw of them (Rom. 1:29-31). Nor was this light and knowledge sufficient to point out to them the true way, how incensed Deity may be appeased, or sinners be reconciled to God; or by what means atonement for sin could be made, and therefore put such questions as in Micah 6:6, 7 not the least hint did it give of a sin bearing and sin atoning Saviour, and of the blood of Christ which makes peace with God, and cleanses from all sin; nor could it give men any good ground to hope for pardon of sin on any account whatever; though they might presume on the mercy of God, and conjecture that he would forgive their sins upon their repentance, this they could not be sure of; at most it was but an "who can tell" if God

will repent and turn from his fierce anger, as said the Ninevites (Jonah 3:9). Nor was it sufficient to assure them of a future state of happiness, and describe what that is; as for the immortality of the soul, they had some faint views of it, and rather wished it to be true than believed it; of the resurrection of the dead they had no hope; and what that happiness of man hereafter they sometimes speak of, they had gross notions of, such as had any; and could not assure themselves by all their virtue that they should enjoy it. Life and immortality are only truly brought to light by the gospel.

2. There is a knowledge of God by the law, the law of Moses, the moral law; though this came by Moses, it was of God, and shows what is his good and perfect will; it is a transcript of his nature, his justice and holiness; but then it only gives knowledge of him as a lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy, and as an incensed God threatening wrath to the breakers of it, without any hope of mercy, not even on the foot of repentance; it accuses of sin, the breach of it; pronounces guilty for it, and is the ministration of condemnation and death; by it is the knowledge of sin, but not of a saviour from it. The ceremonial law was indeed a shadow of good things to come by Christ; its sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Christ; it was the Jews schoolmaster that taught them Christ, and directed them to him.

3. There is a knowledge of God which comes by the gospel, the doctrine of grace and truth, that is by Christ, who lay in the bosom of his Father, and has declared him, his person, his nature, his grace, his mind and will to men; God has spoken by his Son, and made the largest discovery of himself by him; and makes use of the ministers of the gospel to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face or person of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person: and it is of this kind of knowledge of God in Christ, that souls are made partakers, when they are renewed in the spirit of their minds; this is not a mere notional and speculative knowledge, such as the carnal Jews had, who had a form of knowledge in the law, and by breaking it dishonored God; and which some who call themselves Christians may have, who profess in words to know God, but in works deny him; who say, Lord, Lord, but do not the will of our Father in heaven: but this is a spiritual and experimental knowledge of God, such as a spiritual man has, and that from the Spirit of God as a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and which leads men to mind and savour spiritual things. This is a knowledge which is attended with faith in God as a covenant God in Christ; it is a fiducial knowledge, such as know his name put their trust in him, in whom is everlasting strength, and from whom they expect all supplies of grace; and having knowledge of him as their portion and exceeding great reward, they hope in him for what they want in time, and for happiness with him hereafter; and such knowledge always includes in it love to God, and the most cordial affection for him; "he who loveth not, knoweth not God" (1 John 4:8), for if he knew him he could not but love him, and say of him, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee". Such knowledge is accompanied with a filial fear and reverence of God; where there is no knowledge of God there is no fear of God; but where there is knowledge of God, of his grace and goodness, and of his pardoning mercy in Christ, men fear the Lord and his goodness; for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared; not with a slavish but a childlike fear; and where it is known he is so feared. And such a knowledge is practical, and it is known to be right by being so; "hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3), for such only may be said to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding", in a true spiritual and evangelical manner, when the end for which they have it, and for which they desire it, is, to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing"; that is, to do the will of God in the most acceptable manner (Col. 1:9, 10), and a knowledge attended with such graces and fruits of righteousness may be called saving knowledge; that is, salvation is annexed unto it and follows upon it; for "this is life eternal", the beginning of it, and in which it issues (John 17:3).

Now this knowledge of God may be considered as respecting the three divine persons in the Godhead distinctly, Father, Son, and Spirit; and that acquaintance and fellowship with each which such knowledge leads into. For there is a fellowship and communion which believers have with each divine person, which arises from their distinct knowledge of

them (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14).

1. Every renewed soul has knowledge of God the Father. "I write unto you, little children", says the apostle John (1 John 2:13), "because ye have known the Father", the Father of Christ and their Father in Christ; for he that is Christ's Father is their Father, though they are not in the same class of sonship with him; "I ascend to my Father and your Father" (John 20:17), and this relation is made known to them, as children are taught to know their father; and this the saints know by the Spirit of adoption sent down into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father; and witnessing to their spirits that they are the children of God; and this leads into communion with him, and into the enjoyment of many privileges with pleasure. They have knowledge of the love of the Father which is bestowed on them, and is in them, and which appears in their election, in the gift of Christ to them, and in their adoption, and in other blessings of grace; and this is shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit, and they are led by him into the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of it; they are warmed by it, and comforted with it; it is a source of joy, peace and comfort to them; and the knowledge of it is what they glory in and should do, and in that only (Jer. 9:23, 24). They have also knowledge of God the Father as having chosen them in Christ, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in him; for though their election is so early as before the foundation of the world, and so secret as it is in Christ, yet it may be known by them; "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God"; how and by what means? by the powerful influence of the gospel upon their hearts, "for our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power" (1 Thess. 1:4, 5), they have knowledge of him as their covenant God in Christ, who has blessed them with all covenant blessings, with the sure mercies of David; with justification by the righteousness of Christ, pardon of sin for his sake, reconciliation and atonement, adoption, and every other blessing; the knowledge of all which draws out their hearts in thankfulness to the Father of Christ, in love to him, and praise of him (Eph. 1:3, 4). They have knowledge of him as "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself", planning the scheme of their peace, reconciliation and atonement by Christ, "not imputing their trespasses" to them but to their Surety and Saviour; which scheme he has executed by him, and has "by him reconciled" them "to himself", of which they have knowledge, and hence reason in the strong and comfortable manner as the apostle does (Rom. 5:11). Moreover they have knowledge of God the Father as having proclaimed his name in Christ, a God "gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin"; as a God that does abundantly pardon, and which engages their souls to turn unto him, and fills them with wonder and amazement; so that they say, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" and this raises in them the highest gratitude and thankfulness to God; they call upon their souls, and all within them, to "bless his holy name, and not forget his benefits, who forgiveth all their iniquities" (Micah 7:18; Ps. 103:1-3). To observe no more; they know him as "the God of all grace, who has called them to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" his Son; that is, that he is the author and giver of every grace unto them; that their faith is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; that their good hope through grace is of him, and therefore he is called the God of hope, because not only the object but the author and giver of it; for the same reason he is called the God of love, the God of patience, &c. and this knowledge of God the Father leads to deal with him for fresh supplies of grace, and that he would make all grace to abound towards them; this draws them to the throne of grace to seek grace and mercy of him to help them in their time of need.

2. Every renewed soul has knowledge of Christ the Son of God (John 17:3), where the "only true God" designs God the Father, yet not to the exclusion of Christ the Son of God, for he is expressly called the "true God" (also 1 John 5:20) and "eternal life" is made to depend equally upon the knowledge of the one as upon the knowledge of the other; now would Christ ever have ranked himself in this manner with the only true God, if he was not equal with him? and such an interpretation of the passage as would exclude him from being the one only true God with the Father, would exclude the Father from being the one only Lord with the Son (1 Cor. 8:6). Now truly gracious souls have knowledge of the person of Christ, as being truly God and truly man; as being true God, and therefore they venture their souls on him, commit their all unto him, and look unto him for salvation, and trust in him for it, because he is

God and there is none else; and as being truly man, partaker of the same flesh and blood with them, and in all things made like unto them, and so their near kinsman, and who cannot but have sympathy with them; and thus being both God and man, he is fit to be the mediator between both, and to take care of things belonging to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. They have knowledge of him in all his offices, and deal with him as such; with him as their prophet to teach and instruct them by his word, his ministers, and his Spirit; with him as their priest, who by his sacrifice has made atonement for their sins, and by his intercession pleads for every blessing for them; and with him as their king, to rule over them, protect and defend them; and they become willingly subject to his commands and ordinances, and esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right; they know him as their living Redeemer, as Job did; and their souls rejoice in God their Saviour, as Mary the mother of our Lord did; they know him in the various relations he stands in to them, as their everlasting Father, who bears an everlasting love to them, takes an everlasting care of them, and makes everlasting provision for them; as their head of eminence over them, and influence to them; as their husband, who has betrothed them to himself in righteousness and lovingkindness; as their brother, and one that sticks closer than a brother; and as their friend that loves at all times, and of whom they say as the church did, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend". And this knowledge which such souls have of Christ is,

(1). Not merely notional and speculative, such a knowledge the devils have: they know Christ to be the Holy One of God, and that he is the Son of God, and the Messiah (Luke 4:34, 41), and men destitute of the grace of God may know and give their assent to those truths, that Christ is truly God, and existed as the Son of God from all eternity; that he assumed human nature in the fulness of time, that he lived a life of sorrow and trouble, died the death of the cross, was buried and rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is set down at the right hand of God, and will come a second time to judge the world in righteousness; but this spiritual special knowledge gracious souls have is,

(2). An affectionate knowledge, or a knowledge joined with love and affection to Christ; he is in their esteem the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; he is precious to them, and there is none in heaven nor in earth so desired by them as he is.

(3). Their knowledge is a knowledge of approbation, they approve of him above all other lovers, and above all other saviors; they reject all others, and say, "Ashur shall not save us"; we will have no regard to our works, duties and services, as saviors; but they say of him as Job did, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him--he also shall be my salvation", I will have no other (Job 13:15,16).

(4). Their knowledge of him is fiducial; they know his name, his nature, his abilities, his fulness, and suitableness, and therefore they put their trust in him, give up themselves to him, rely and lean upon him, and trust him with all they have, and for all they want, for grace here and glory hereafter.

(5). Their knowledge of him is experimental, they have their spiritual senses exercised on him; they see the Son and believe on him, see the glories of his person, the riches of his grace, the fulness of his righteousness, the efficacy of his blood, and the virtue of his atoning sacrifice; they "hear" his voice with pleasure and delight, the voice of his gospel, so as to understand it, approve of it, and distinguish it from the voice of a stranger they "feel", they handle him the word of life by faith, lay hold on him and retain him; they "taste" that the Lord is gracious, and "savour" the things which be of Christ and not of men.

(6). Their knowledge of Christ is appropriating; it does not lie in generals but in particulars, they know him themselves and for themselves; they do not only say as the Samaritans did, "We know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42), but that he is their Saviour and Redeemer; and say with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God"; and with the apostle Paul, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me"; and with the church, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (John 20:28; Gal. 2:20; Song of Sol 2:16).

3. Every renewed soul has knowledge of the Spirit of God, the world does not know him, but truly gracious souls do; our Lord speaking of him says, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him", neither his person, nor his office, nor his operations; "But ye know him",

meaning his apostles and followers; and gives a very good reason for it, "for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"; and therefore they must have a feeling and experimental knowledge of him (John 14:17). Such as are renewed in the spirit of their minds, have a knowledge of him as a Spirit of conviction and illumination, he having convinced them of sin, the evil nature and sad consequences of it; of righteousness, of the insufficiency of their own righteousness to justify them before God, and of the fulness and suitableness of Christ's righteousness for that purpose; and having had the eyes of their understandings enlightened by him as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, as an able, willing, and complete Saviour; and having received him as the Spirit which is of God, whereby are made known to them the things that are freely given to them of God; the free grace gifts of righteousness, peace, pardon, and eternal life. They have knowledge of him as the Comforter, who comforts them by shedding abroad in their hearts the love of the Father and of the Son; by opening and applying the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and by taking the things of Christ and showing them to them, and their interest in them; and these comforts they have a feeling experience of, for they delight their souls amidst the multitude of their thoughts within them; yea they walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and are edified by them. They have knowledge of him also as the Spirit of adoption, who manifests to them their interest in this blessing; and not only from his witnessing do they know their relation to God as children, but also from their being led by him out of themselves to Christ, and into the truth as it is in Jesus, for such "are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14-16). Moreover they have knowledge of the Spirit as a "Spirit of grace and of supplication", who first works grace in the soul, and then draws it forth into act and exercise; and perhaps there is no season in the Christian life in which this grace is more drawn forth into exercise than when in prayer, public and private, under the influence of the Spirit of supplication; who helps saints under all their infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession in them according to the will of God, impresses a sense of their wants upon them, puts strength into them, and fills their mouths with arguments to plead with God in the exercise of grace: once more, such souls have knowledge of him as the Spirit of truth, that guides into all truth necessary to be known by them, and powerfully applies it to them; who teaches them all things they should know, and brings to their remembrance truths or promises, at proper seasons, for their relief and comfort; and who is the unction they have received from the Holy One, the anointing which teacheth all things, and from which they are denominated Christians; to say no more, they have knowledge of him as an inhabitant in them, for he dwells in them as in his temple; of whose indwelling they are sensible by the operations of his grace upon them; they find he is in them as the earnest of their inheritance, and as the sealer of them unto the day of redemption. Now in this distinct, special, and peculiar knowledge of Father, Son, and Spirit, and in that communion with them, which arises from hence, inward experimental religion greatly lies.

To this head of the object of knowledge all divine things may be reduced that are knowable, that are to be known or should be known by the Christian; there are some things that are not to be known, and which will, ever be known, neither in this life nor in that to come; there are some things that angels know not, yea which the human soul of Christ knew not in his state of humiliation; this is not to be called ignorance, but nescience, or non-knowledge. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deut. 29:29). The former we should not curiously search into, as not belonging to us, nor should we exercise ourselves in things too high for us, and which are out of our reach, nor should we seek to be wise above what is written; the latter we should study the knowledge of, and to improve therein, even the knowledge of each of the truths and doctrines of the gospel, so as to try and know the things that differ, and to approve the more excellent; and also of the will of God, or duties of religion, which are to be observed, that so we may walk worthy of God in all well pleasing. The next thing to be considered is,

2*dly*, the causes of this knowledge, and from whence it springs. It is not to be attained to by the light of nature, or what light the works of nature give; for it may be said of this knowledge what Job says of wisdom and understanding, when he asks, "Where shall wisdom be found?" and "Where is the place of understanding?" to which he answers, it is not

known by man, nor is it here nor there, nor can any estimation be made of it, only "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof"; what place it is to be found in, and in what way, and from whence it cometh (Job 28:12, 23). Nor is it to be found in the law of Moses; by that God may be known to be holy, just, and righteous, but not as a God gracious and merciful; by it is the knowledge of sin, but not the knowledge of Christ as a Saviour from sin; by it may be known what is the will of God with respect to what should be done and what should be avoided, but no knowledge does it give of the Spirit of God to help in the performance of duty, or in the exercise of grace. Nor is it to be acquired by carnal reason; the deep things of God, the mysteries of his grace, are what the carnal eye of man has not seen, nor his ear heard, nor has it entered into his heart to conceive of. When Peter made that excellent confession of the Deity, Sonship and Messiahship of Christ, our Lord said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee"; not carnal reason, nor carnal men, "but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). This is not to be had from men; the knowledge the apostle Paul had of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, and of the glorious doctrines of the gospel, he had them not at the feet of Gamaliel, nor from his mouth, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11, 12).

1. The efficient cause of this knowledge is God; it is God that teacheth men knowledge, and none teaches like him; and this he teaches persons the most unlikely to learn, even such as "are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts"; that is, just weaned, who were but the other day babes and sucklings; this knowledge is from God, Father, Son and Spirit. Such as have "heard and learned of the Father, come to Christ"; that is, believe on him (John 6:45). It is the Father who knows the Son, and reveals him, as he did to Peter, and who reveals the things he hides from the wise and prudent, even unto babes; and "no man knows the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27), he who lay in his bosom declares him, his mind and will, his love and grace; and he "gives an understanding" to "know" himself, who "is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20), and the Spirit, he is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God and Christ; he searches the deep things of God, arid reveals them to men; and by him they know the things that are freely given them of God (Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:10-12).

2. The impulsive cause is the sovereign will and pleasure of God. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matthew 11:25, 26), it being solely owing to his good will and pleasure to make known to whom he would make known the mysteries of his grace and gospel concerning himself, his Son and Spirit; (see Col. 1:27).

3. The instrumental cause or means is the word of God. "Faith", which sometimes goes by the name of knowledge, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), that is, by the external ministration of the word, the Lord owning and blessing it. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was appointed, commissioned, and sent of God "to give knowledge of salvation to his people"; and the apostles and ministers of the gospel had the treasures of evangelical truths put into their earthen vessels, "to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The ministry of the word is appointed as a standing ordinance in the church, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Luke 1:17; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:13).

Thirdly, the nature and properties of this knowledge deserve notice: and,

1. This knowledge is practical; the mere theory of any science, unless reduced to practice, is of little avail; men may have all knowledge that is notional and speculative, and yet be nothing; a profession to know God and Christ, and in works to deny them, is far from being saving knowledge; such who walk as other Gentiles do, have not truly learned Christ the gospel of the grace of God, when it comes with power, teaches men to deny ungodliness, and to live a sober, righteous, and godly conversation.

2. It is of a soul humbling nature; as the instances of Job, Isaiah, and the apostle Paul show (Job 42:6; Isa. 6:5; Eph. 3:8), whereas other knowledge puffs up, makes men conceited, proud, haughty, and overbearing.

3. It is pleasant, savoury, and satisfying; "he that increaseth" natural "knowledge, increaseth sorrow" (Eccl. 1:18), for the more he knows, he finds he knows less than he thought he did; and this gives him

pain, that his knowledge is so small; and his larger knowledge attracts the envy of others, and raises an opposition to him; but spiritual knowledge, and an increase of that, yield him joy, peace, and comfort: we read of the "savour of the knowledge" of Christ, and of the savour of his good ointment; and of his name being as ointment poured forth, which emits a most fragrant and delightful smell (2 Cor. 2:14; Song of Sol. 1:3).

4. This knowledge is excellent, yea super excellent; the apostle "Paul counted all things but loss for the excellency" of it (Phil. 3:8), it is to be preferred to gold and silver, to jewels and precious stones, and all desirable things (Prov. 3:13, 14; 8:10, 11), it far excels all other kind of knowledge. What if a man had knowledge of all the heavenly bodies, and of whatsoever is in the bowels of the earth, or dwells upon it, or grows out of it, so that he could with Solomon speak of trees and their nature, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; it would be nothing in comparison of the knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ, since to know them is life eternal.

5. This knowledge indeed is but imperfect in this life; those that know most only know in part, yet it is progressive; there is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ; the light of saints is an increasing one, the path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day; they that know the Lord shall follow on to know him, and shall know more of him, for so the words in Hosea 6:3 should be rendered; "and we shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord", the "if" ought to be left out, not being in the original.

6. There are various means which should be made use of for the increase of this knowledge, such as reading the scriptures, which are profitable for doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness; constantly and diligently searching into them, since they testify of Christ, of his person, and office, and grace; likewise attendance upon the ministry of the word, waiting at wisdom's gates, and watching at the posts of her door, which is the way to find wisdom and get understanding; also frequent and fervent prayer, if "thou criest after knowledge", thou shalt "find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3, 5), great is the encouragement given to make use of such a method; (see Jam. 1:5; Matthew 7:6). Conversation with wise and good men, and such as fear the Lord, who by conferring together find the advantage of it; they build up one another on their most holy faith, establish each other in it, and increase in knowledge; for "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise", grow wiser and wiser (Prov. 13:20).

---

[5] Vid. Vatablum in loc.

Chapter 4

OF REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD

Repentance is another part of internal worship; it is a branch of godliness which lies in the disposition of the soul Godwards; for in the exercise of this the sensible sinner has much to do with God; he has a special respect to him against whom he has sinned, and therefore it is with great propriety called "Repentance towards God" (Acts 20:21). Concerning which may be observed,

1. Its name, and the words and phrases by which it is expressed, both in the Old and in the New Testament, and by Jews, Greeks, and Latins, which may give some light into the thing itself.

1*st*, the Jews commonly express it by tsvvh a "turning", or "returning", and it is frequently signified in the Old Testament by a man's turning from his evil ways, and returning to the Lord; the term from which he turns is sin, the term to which he turns is the Lord, against whom he has sinned; and what most powerfully moves, encourages, and induces him to turn, is the pardoning grace and mercy of God through Christ (Isa. 55:7), and so in the New Testament, repentance and turning are mentioned together, and the latter as explanative of the former; (see Acts 3:19; 26:20).

There is another word in Hebrew used for repentance, nchm (Hosea 11:8; 13:14), which also signifies comfort; because such who sincerely repent of sin, and are truly humbled for it, should be comforted, lest, as the apostle says, they should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:7), and it is God's usual way to bring his people "into the wilderness", into a distressed state, to lead them into a sense of sin, and humiliation for it, and then to speak comfortably to them (Hosea 2:14), and the Spirit of

God is first a reprover for sin, and a convincer of it, and then a comforter; be first shows men the evil nature of sin, and the just desert of it, and gives them the grace of repentance for it, and then comforts them with the application of pardon through the blood of Jesus (John 16:7, 8, 14), and blessed are they that mourn for sin in an evangelical manner, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

2*dly,* the Greek word more frequently used in the New Testament for repentance is metanoia, which signifies an "after understanding", or "after knowledge"; as when a man takes into serious consideration a fact after it is committed, and thinks otherwise of it, and wishes he had not done it, is sorry for it, and resolves, through the grace of God, to forsake such practices; this is a proof of a man's wisdom and understanding; now he begins to be wise, and to show himself an understanding man; even an heathen [6] could say, "Repentance is the beginning of wisdom, and an avoiding of foolish works and words, and the first preparation to a life not to be repented of."

It is a change of the mind for the better, and which produces change of action and conduct: this, as it is expressive of true repentance, flows from the understanding being enlightened by the Spirit of God, when the sinner beholds sin in another light it did, even as exceeding sinful; and loathes it, and abhors it and himself for it. There is another word the Greeks use for repentance, metameleia, and though the noun is not used in the New Testament, the verb is (Matthew 21:29, 32), and signifies a care and anxiety of mind after a fact is committed, a concern with sorrow that it should be done, and a care for the future not to do it again; hence the apostle, among the genuine fruits of godly sorrow for sin, mentions this in the first place, "What carefulness it wrought in you", not to offend more (2 Cor. 7:11). It also signifies a change of mind and conduct, as appears from (Matthew 21:29), a penitent sinner has another notion of sin than he had; before it was a sweet morsel, now a bitter and evil thing; before his heart was bent upon it, now determined through divine grace to forsake it, and cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Thirdly, The Latins generally express repentance by "poenitentia", from "poena" punishment; hence our English word "penitence", and the popish "penance", which is a sort of corporal punishment for sin inflicted on the body by fastings, scourgings, pilgrimages, &c. but true penitence lies not in these things, but is rather an inward punishment of the mind, when a man is so displeased with himself for what he has done, and so severely reflects upon himself for it, that he takes as it were a kind of vengeance on himself within himself, which are the lashes of conscience; [7] so the apostle observes of godly sorrow, "What indignation, yea what revenge" it wrought in you, as in the above quoted place; and this inward revenge is sometimes expressed by outward gestures, as by smiting upon the thigh, and upon the breast (Jer. 31:19; Luke 18:13).

There is another word which the Latins use for repentance, "resipiscentia", which signifies a man's being wise again, a coming to his wits, to his senses again. [8] Lactantius [9] explains it of the recovery of a man's mind from a state of insanity; a man, while he is in an unconverted and impenitent state, is not himself, he is not in his right mind; not only his foolish heart is darkened, and he is without understanding, and to do good has no knowledge, but "madness" is "in his heart while he lives" in such a state; every act of sin is not only folly but madness, as all acts of hostility committed against God, which sins are, must needs be; "the man that dwelt among the tombs" (Mark 5:1-20), is a fit emblem of such persons: now when an impenitent sinner becomes penitent, he may be said to "come to himself", as the prodigal did (Luke 15:17), so the apostle Paul before conversion was exceeding mad against the saints, and thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus; but when he was converted he was recovered from his insanity, and appeared sober and in his right mind, and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" when a sinner is truly convinced of sin, and thoroughly humbled for it, and has repentance unto life given him, and a comfortable application of the blood and righteousness of Christ unto him for his pardon and justification, and his mind is become sedate, serene and quiet, the man who before was mad, is an emblem of him, when he was seen "sitting clothed and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15).

Fourthly, the word "contrition", or brokenness of mind, is sometimes used for repentance, and there is some foundation for it in the word of God; we often read of a contrite heart and spirit; David says

he was "feeble and sore broken" (Ps. 38:8), which seems to be under a sense of sin: a man's heart is naturally hard, as hard as the nether millstone, and therefore called a "stony heart", and such an one is an impenitent one; hence hardness, and an impenitent heart, are put together, as designing the same thing (Rom. 2:5). The word of God is made use of to break it in pieces, "is not my word--like a hammer to break the rock in pieces?" that is, to make the heart contrite, which is like to a rock, and whereby it becomes soft and tender, as Josiah's was, like an heart of flesh, susceptible of serious impressions, and of a true sense of things; and though this contrition of heart seems to be a work of the law, by which is the knowledge of sin, and which works wrath in the conscience on account of it, smites and cuts and wounds it; yet hereby it is prepared to receive the benefit of the gospel, by which the Lord "heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Ps. 147:3; Isa. 61:1). However, great notice is taken of men of contrite hearts and spirits; the sacrifices of such hearts are acceptable to God; he looks unto, is nigh unto, and dwells with those who are of such a spirit and saves them (Ps. 51:17; 34:18; Isa. 57:15; 66:2), besides the heart may be broken, made soft and melted down as much or more under a sense of pardoning grace displayed in the gospel, than under a sense of wrath through the threatenings and terrors of the law.

Fifthly, repentance is expressed by sorrow for sin. "My sorrow is continually before me", says David, "I will be sorry for my sin" (Ps. 38:17, 18), and which is signified not by outward gestures, not by rending garments, but by rending the heart (Joel 2:13), it is a felt pain and inward sorrow of the heart for sin, and what the apostle calls a sorrow "after a godly sort", kata theon, "after God", which is according to the mind and will of God; and because of sin committed against God, a God of love, grace, and mercy, and which springs from love to God and hatred of sin, and is attended with faith in God, as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, for Christ's sake; but of this more hereafter.

II. The nature and kinds of repentance. Not to take notice of the penance of the Papists, which lies in punishing their bodies, as before observed; and in men making themselves, or in others making them, public examples in such a way; which though it may be called repentance before men, it is not repentance towards God, nor does it answer the end vainly intended by it, making satisfaction for sin; nor is an external reformation of life and manners repentance in the sight of God. Men may be outwardly reformed, as the Pharisees were, and yet not repent of their sins, as they did not (Matthew 21:32; 23:28), and after such an external reformation men may return to their former sinful course of life, and their last end be worse than the beginning; besides there may be true repentance for sin where there is no time and opportunity for reformation, or showing forth a reformation of life and manners, as in the thief upon the cross and others, who are brought to repentance on their death beds; and reformation of life and manners, when it is best and most genuine, is the fruit and effect of repentance, and a bringing forth fruits meet for it, as evidences of it, and so distinct from that itself.

1*st*, there is a natural repentance, or what is directed to by the light of nature, and the dictates of a natural conscience; for as there was in the heathens, and so is in every natural man, a knowledge of good and evil, of the difference in some respects between moral good and evil, and a conscience which, when it does its office, approves of what is well done, and accuses for that which is ill; so when conscience charges a man with doing an ill thing, and he is convinced of it, the light of nature and conscience direct him to wish he had not done it, and to repent of it, and to endeavour for the future to avoid it; as may be seen in the case of the Ninevites, who being threatened with the destruction of their city for their sins, proclaimed a fast, and issued out an order that everyone should turn from his evil ways, in hope that the wrath of God would be averted from them, though they could not be fully assured of it. The Gentiles laid great stress upon their repentance to conciliate the favour of God unto them; for they thought this made complete satisfaction for their sins, and wiped them clean, so that they imagined they were almost if not altogether pure and innocent: [10] there is a repentance which the goodness of God in providence might or should lead men unto, which yet it does not, but after their hardness and impenitent heart treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:4, 5).

2*dly*, There is a national repentance, such as the

Jews in Babylon were called unto, to which temporal blessings were promised, and a deliverance from temporal calamities; as on the one hand, a living in their own land, and a comfortable enjoyment of good things in it; and on the other hand, captivity, and all the distresses of it threatened; "Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. 18:30-32), and which has no connection with the special grace of God, and with spiritual and everlasting things. The same people were called to repent of their Pharisaism, of their disbelief of the Messiah, and other evil works; and were told that the men of Nineveh would rise up in judgment and condemn them, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and yet a greater than Jonah, even Christ himself, called them to repentance (Matthew 12:41). The same people were called upon by the apostles of Christ to repent of their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and to turn unto him, and to save themselves from temporal ruin, which for their impenitence and unbelief came upon their nation, city, and temple (Acts 3:19).

3*dly*, there is an external repentance, or an outward humiliation for sin, such as was in Ahab, which, though nothing more, it was taken notice of by the Lord, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" and though it lay only in rending his clothes, and putting on sackcloth, and in fasting, and in a mournful way, yet the Lord was pleased to promise that the evil threatened should not come in his days (1 Kings 21:29). And such is the repentance Tyre and Sidon would have exercised, had they had the advantages and privileges that some cities had, where Christ taught his doctrines, and wrought miracles; and of this kind was the repentance of the Ninevites which was regarded of God (Matthew 11:21; 12:41).

4*thly*, there is an hypocritical repentance, such as was in the people of Israel in the wilderness, who when the wrath of God broke out against them for their sins, "returned" unto him, or repented, but "their heart was not right with him" (Ps 78:34-37), so it is said of Judah, she "hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord"; and of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, "they return, but not to the Most High, they are like a deceitful bow" (Hosea 7:16), who turned aside and dealt unfaithfully.

5*thly*, there is a legal and there is an evangelical repentance.

1. There is a legal one, which is a mere work of the law, and the effect of convictions of sin by it, which in time wear off and come to nothing; for,

(1). There may be a sense of sin and an acknowledgment of it, and yet no true repentance for it, as in the cases of Pharaoh and of Judas, who both said, "I have sinned" (Ex. 9:27; Matthew 27:4), yet they had no true sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, nor godly sorrow for it.

(2). There may be a kind of sorrow for it, not for the evil of fault that is in sin, but on account of the evil of punishment for it, as appears in some cases, and in Cain's (Gen. 4:13).

(3). There may be a great deal of terror of mind because of sin, a great outcry about it, a fearful looking for of judgment for it, abundance of tears shed on the account of it, as were by Esau for the blessing, without success; the devils believe and tremble, but do not repent; [11] there are weeping and wailing in hell, but no repentance.

(4). Such a repentance, if no more than a mere legal one, issues in despair, as in Cain, whose words may be rendered, "My sin is greater than that it may be forgiven"; it is a repentance that may be repented of and is not unto life, but ends in death, as it did in Judas; it is "the sorrow of the world which worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

2. There is an evangelical repentance, which lies,

(1). In a true sight and sense of sits; in a sight of it, as in itself considered as exceeding sinful in its own nature, and not merely as in its effects and consequences ruinous and destructive; not only in a sight of it in the glass of the divine law, but as that is held in the hand, and seen in the light of the blessed Spirit; and in a sight of it as contrary to the pure and holy nature of God, as well as repugnant to his will, and a breach of his law; and in a view of it as it appears in the glass of pardoning love and grace.

(2). In a hearty and unfeigned sorrow for it; this sorrow for it is the rather because it is against God, and that not only as a holy and righteous Being, but as good, and gracious, and merciful, of whose goodness, both in providence and grace, the sinner is sensible; the consideration of which increases his sorrow, and makes it the more intense and hearty.

(3). It is attended with shame and confusion of

face, as in Ezra 9:6, 8, 10 and Luke 18:13 this shame increases the more, the more a sinner is sensible that God is "pacified towards him for all that he has done" (Ezek. 16:63).

(4). Such a repentance is accompanied with a loathing, detestation, and abhorrence of sin as the worst of evils; to truly penitent sinners sin appears most odious and loathsome; nay they not only loath their sins but themselves for them, and the rather when most sensible of the goodness of God in bestowing both temporal and spiritual blessings on them, and especially the latter (Ezek. 20:40-44; 36:25-31), yea they abhor it as of all things the most detestable, when they are in the exercise of this grace; so it was with holy Job, when favored with a special sight of the greatness and goodness of God (Job 42:6; Isa. 6:5).

(5). Where this repentance is there is an ingenuous acknowledgment of sin, as may be seen in David (Ps. 32:5; 51:3 in Dan. 9:4, 5), and in the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:13-15), so the prodigal, as soon as he came to himself, and was made sensible of his sin, and repented of it, went to his father, and said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight" (Luke 15:21), and to encourage such a sincere repentance and ingenuous confession, the apostle John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

(6). It is followed with a resolution, through the grace of God, to forsake sin; this the sinner is encouraged unto, as before observed, by the abundance of pardon through the mercy of God in Christ (Isa. 55:7), and indeed it is only such who can expect to share in it; "Whoso confesseth (sins) and forsaketh them, shall have merry" (Prov. 28:13). Now such a repentance appears to be evangelical; inasmuch, as

1. It is from the Spirit of God, who reproves for sin and convinces of it, enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and as a Spirit of grace and supplication works this grace in the heart, and draws it forth into exercise, to mourn over sin in a gospel manner at the throne of grace (Zech. 12:10).

2. Such repentance, in the exercise of it, follows upon real conversion and divine instruction, "Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh" (Jer. 31:19) upon such a turn as is made by powerful and efficacious grace, and upon such instruction as leads into the true nature of sin, the effect of which is blushing shame and confusion.

3. Is what is encouraged and influenced by gospel promises, such as these in (Isa. 55:7; Jer. 3:12, 13), now when repentance proceeds not upon the terrors of the law, but upon such gracious promises as these, it may be called evangelical.

4. It is that which is attended with faith and hope: repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, go together as doctrines, and so they do as graces; which is first in exercise is not easy to say; our Lord says of the Pharisees, that they "repented not, that they might believe", which looks as if repentance was before and in order to believing (Matthew 21:32), and elsewhere faith is represented as first looking to Christ, and then repentance or mourning for sin; repentance, as some have expressed it, is a tear that drops from faith's eye (Zech. 12:10). However, that is truly evangelical repentance which has with it faith in the blood of Christ for the remission of sins; for repentance and remission of sins, as they go together as doctrines, so also as blessings of grace (Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31), for where true repentance for sin is, there must be faith in Christ for the remission of it, at least hope of pardon by his blood, or else such repentance would issue in despair, and appear to be no other than the sorrow of the world which worketh death.

5. It is such a repentance which flows not from dread of punishment, and from fear of the wrath of God, but from love to God, and of righteousness and holiness, and from an hatred of sin; they that love the Lord hate evil, and they love righteousness and hate evil because he does; and when tempted to sin reason after this manner, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God", so holy just, and good, and who has shown such love and kindness to me? (Gen. 39:9), it was love to Christ, flowing from a sense of pardoning grace and mercy, that fetched such a flood of tears from the eyes of the penitent woman at Christ's feet, with which she washed them, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; and which caused Peter, under a sense of sin, to go out and weep bitterly (Luke 7:37, 38, 47; 22:61, 62).

III. The object and subjects of repentance; the object is sin, the subjects are sinners.

First, the object of repentance is sin, hence called "repentance from dead works", which sins be; and from which the blood of Christ purges the conscience of a penitent sinner, and speaks peace and pardon to it (Heb. 6:2; 9:14). And,

1*st*, not only grosser sins, but sins of a lesser size, are to be repented of; there is a difference in sins, some are greater others lesser (John 19:11), both are to be repented of; sins against the first and second tables of the law, sins more immediately against God, and sins against men; and some against men are more heinous and enormous than others, as well as those against God; as not only worshipping of devils, and idols of gold and silver, &c. but murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts, which ought to be repented of, but by some were not, though they had deliverances from plagues, which was an aggravation of their impenitence (Rev. 9:20, 21), and not only those, but also sins of a lesser kind are to be repented of; and even sinful thoughts, for the thought of foolishness is sin, and to be repented of; for the unrighteous man is to repent of and forsake his thoughts, as well as the wicked man his ways, and turn to the Lord; and not only unclean, proud, malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts are to be repented of, but even thoughts of seeking for justification before God by a man's own righteousness, which may be intended in the text referred to (Isa. 55:7).

2*dly,* not only public but private sins are to be repented of. There are some sins which are committed in a very public manner, in the face of the sun, and are known to all; and there are others that are more secret; and a truly sensible sinner, as he desires to be "cleansed from secret faults", or to have those forgiven him, so he heartily repents of them, even of sins known to none but God and his own soul; and this is a proof of the genuineness of his repentance.

3*dly*, there are sins both of omission and commission, which are to be repented of; when a man omits those duties of religion which ought to be done, or commits those sins which ought to be avoided by him; or omits the weightier matters of religion, and only attends to lesser ones, when he ought to have done the one, and not to have left the other undone; and as God forgives both (Isa. 43:22-25), so both sorts of sins are to be repented of; and a sense of pardoning grace will engage the sensible sinner to it.

4*thly*, there are sins which are committed in the most solemn, serious, religious, and holy performances of God's people, which are to be repented of; for there is not a just man that does good and sinneth not in that good he does; there is not only an imperfection, but an impurity in the best righteousness of the saints of their own working out, and therefore called filthy rags; and as there was provision made under the law for the bearing and removing the sins of holy things, as by Aaron the high priest, so there is a provision made for the atonement of these as well as all other sins, by Christ our high priest; and therefore these are to be confessed and mourned over the head of him our antitypical scape goat.

5*thly*, the daily sins of life are to be repented of; no man lives without sin, it is daily committed by the best of men, in many things we all offend, and even in all things; and as we have need to pray, and are directed to pray daily for the forgiveness of sin, so we are to repent of it daily; repentance is not only to be exercised upon the first conviction and conversion of a sinner, nor only on account of some grievous sin, or great backsliding he may after fall into, but it is continually to be exercised by believers, since they are continually sinning against God in thought, word, and deed.

6*thly*, not only actual sins and transgressions in thought, word, and deed, are to be repented of, but original and indwelling sin. Thus David when he fell into some grievous sins, and was brought to a true sense of them, and a sincere repentance for them, he not only made a confession of them in the penitential psalm he wrote on that occasion, but he was led to take notice of, and acknowledge and mourn over the original corruption of his nature, from whence all his sinful actions flowed, saying, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5). So the apostle Paul, though he lived a life unstained, and in all good conscience, free from any public, external, notorious sin, yet owned and lamented the sin that dwelt in him, and the force, power, and prevalence of it, as that it hindered him from doing the good he would, and put him on doing the evil he would not (Rom. 7:18-24). Now when a sensible sinner confesses, laments, and mourns over the original corruption of his nature, and the sin that dwells in him, it is a clear case his repentance is genuine and sincere,

since it is what he himself is only sensible of. Now all this is with respect to God; the sinner repents of sin with regard to God, and as it concerns him, and therefore is called "repentance towards God", and a sorrow for it "after a godly sort" (Acts 20:21; 2 Cor. 7:11), and he repents of sin because sin is committed against him. All sin is against God in a sense, as it is against his will, yet there is distinction between sins against God and against men (1 Sam. 2:25), now sin committed against God, and considered as such, is a cutting consideration to a sensible sinner, sensible of the greatness and goodness of God, and causes his sorrow and repentance for sin to rise higher, as it was to David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4).

2. Because sin is a breach of the law of God (1 John 3:4), of that law, which is itself, holy, just, and good; of that law of which God is the giver, and who is that lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy, and on whose legislative power and authority a contempt is cast by sin, and which therefore gives pain and distress of mind to the penitent sinner.

3. Because sin is contrary to the nature of God, as well as to his law; he is of purer eyes than to behold it with approbation; he is not a God that takes pleasure in it, but is displeased with it; it is the abominable thing his righteous soul hates, and therefore they that love the Lord must hate it, and it cannot but give them a concern, and cause sorrow when they commit it.

4. And the rather as by sinning a slight is cast on his goodness, grace, and love, and which occasions severe reflections on themselves, and much shame and blushing that they should sin against so much goodness, and against God, who has shown them so much favour, loved them so greatly, and bestowed such blessings of grace upon them.

5. It appears that the sinner in repentance has to do with God, by confessing his sin and his sorrow for it; and also others glorify God for granting repentance to him as the Christian Jews did on the behalf of the Gentiles (Acts 11:18), and even there is joy in heaven, and God is glorified by the angels there, on account even of one sinner that repents (Luke 15:7, 10).

Secondly, the subjects of repentance are sinners, and only such; Adam, in a state of innocence, was not a subject of repentance, for not having sinned he had no sin to repent of; and such who fancy themselves to be perfectly righteous, and without sin in their own apprehensions, stand in no need of repentance, and therefore Christ says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13; Luke 15:7). Now,

1. All men are sinners, all descending from Adam by ordinary generation; all his posterity being seminally in him, and represented by him when he sinned, sinned in him, and they both have his sin imputed to them, and a corrupt nature derived from him; and so are transgressors from the womb, and are all guilty of actual sins and transgressions; and so all stand in need of repentance, even such who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others as less holy than themselves, and think they need no repentance: yet they do; and not only they, but such who are in the best sense righteous need daily repentance, since they are continually sinning in all they do.

2. Men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, are the subjects of repentance; for all are under sin, under the power of it, involved in the guilt of it, and liable to punishment for it, and God has commanded "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). During the time of John the Baptist, and of our Lord's being on earth, the doctrine of repentance was only preached to the Jews; but after the resurrection of Christ he gave his apostles an instruction and order "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47), in consequence of which the apostles first exhorted the Jews and then the Gentiles to repent, and particularly the apostle Paul "testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God", as well as "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

3. Men are only subjects of repentance in the present life; when this life is ended, and the gospel dispensation is over, and Christ is come a second time, the door of repentance as well as of faith will be shut, and there will be no place found for it; no opportunity nor means of it; nor any subjects capable of it; as for the saints in heaven they need it not, being entirely without sin; and as for the wicked in hell, they are in utter despair, and not capable of repentance unto life, and unto salvation not to be repented of, and though there is weeping and wailing there, yet no repentance; hence the rich man in hell was so solicitous to have

Lazarus sent to his brethren living, hoping, that by means of one that came to them from the dead to warn them of the place of torment, they would repent, as well knowing they never would if not in the present life, and before they came into the place where he was; and therefore repentance is not to be procrastinated.

IV. The Author, and cause, and means of repentance.

1. The Author and efficient cause of it is not man himself, but God; "then hath God also granted repentance to the Gentiles" (Acts 11:18), it is not in the power of man to repent of himself, for he is by nature blind, and has no sight and sense of sin; his understanding is darkened with respect unto it, and he is darkness itself till made light in the Lord; and until he has a sight and sense of sin he can never truly repent of it; his heart is hard and obdurate, his heart is an heart of stone, and he cannot really repent of sin until that stony heart is taken away, and an heart of flesh is given; and whenever he becomes sensible of his need of repentance, he prays to God for it, saying, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned": nor do exhortations to repentance suppose it in the power of man to repent of himself; since these are only designed to bring him to a sense of his need of it, and of his obligation to it, and of his impotence to it of himself through the hardness of his heart, and to direct him to seek it of God, who only can give it; for,

2. Though God may give men space to repent, yet if he does not give the grace of repentance, they never will repent. Thus he gave space to the old world, threatened with a flood, which some think is meant by the one hundred and twenty years allowed them, when the longsuffering of God waited in the times of Noah, while the ark was preparing, but without effect; so Jezebel, or Antichrist, is said to have "space" given her "to repent of her fornication, and she repented not" (Rev. 2:21), and this God sometimes gives to the children of men to show his sovereignty, that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and give repentance to whom he pleases; and for the sake of his elect, not willing that any of them should perish, but that they should all come to repentance, and therefore his longsuffering towards them is salvation; and this also he sometimes gives to show his forbearance of the vessels of wrath, and to leave them inexcusable. Nay,

3. Though some men have the means of repentance, yet grace not being given them of God they repent not; the word, unless attended with power, is ineffectual; the most severe judgments inflicted on men are insufficient, as the plagues on Pharaoh, whose heart was the worse and more hardened under them (Ex. 11:10), and though the children of Israel were smitten with famine, with the pestilence, and with the sword, yet they repented not, nor returned unto the Lord (Amos 4:6-11), so the fourth and fifth vials poured forth on men, which will scorch and fill them with pains and sores, instead of repenting of their deeds they will blaspheme the God of heaven and his name (Rev. 16:8-11). And on the other hand, the greatest instances of mercy and goodness to men, and singular deliverances wrought for them, which should, and one would think would, lead men to repentance, and yet they do not (Rom. 2:4, 5; Rev. 9:20, 21), yea the most powerful and awakening ministry that a man can sit under, has no influence on the minds of men to bring them to repentance, without the power and grace of God; such as was the ministry of John the Baptist, who was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preaching in a loud, vehement, and powerful manner, the baptism of repentance; and yet though some publicans and harlots believed, the Pharisees repented not afterwards that they might believe (Matthew 21:32), our Lord spake as one having authority, yet few believed; and many cities where he preached, and mighty works were done by him, yet repented not; and if one was to rise from the dead, and describe all the happiness of the blissful state of the saints in heaven he was capable of, or paint all the horrors of the damned in hell, it would have no effect, neither to allure nor frighten to repentance, or bring men to it, without the exertion of powerful and efficacious grace (Luke 16:31).

4. The sole efficient cause and author of repentance is God, Father, Son, and Spirit. God the Father, "if God peradventure will give them repentance" (2 Tim. 2:25). Christ, the Son of God, as mediator, is exalted "to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31), and the Spirit of God reproves for sin, convinces of it, and works repentance for it (John 16:8).

5. The moving cause of it is the free grace of God; it is a grant and favour from him, a gift of Christ, which

he, as a prince and a savior bestows (Acts 11:18; 5:31), and an operation of the power and grace of the Spirit of God, and entirely flows from the sovereign will and mercy of God, "who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18), not giving grace to repent.

6. The usual means and instruments of repentance are the word, and the ministers of it; as faith, so repentance, comes by hearing the word; the three thousand were pricked to the heart, and were brought to repentance, through the ministry of the apostle Peter; and as all the apostles were ordered by Christ to preach repentance in his name among all nations, so they went forth everywhere, and God in and by their ministry commanded all men everywhere to repent; and when and where the command was attended with power it produced the effect; and so the apostle Paul declared to Jews and Gentiles, that "they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"; and the hand of the Lord being with him, great numbers everywhere believed and turned to the Lord (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; 26:20).

V. The effects and consequences of repentance; such effects as are evidences of it, and show it to be genuine; and such consequences which are salutary, and show the blessings of grace are connected with it.

1*st*, the effects of it, which prove it to be genuine; such as the apostle mentions as fruits of godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:11).

1. "Carefulness" to exercise repentance in a proper way, and to bring forth fruits meet for it; carefulness not to sin any more in a like manner, or to live a sinful course of life, but to abstain from all appearance of evil; and carefulness not to offend God again, who had been so good and gracious to them.

2. "Clearing of themselves"; not by denying the fact, as Gehazi, nor by extenuating and palliating it as Adam, but by an ingenuous confession of it, praying it might be forgiven, and that they might be cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus; so clearing themselves from the charges of hardness of heart, impenitence, and ingratitude, and of neglect of repentance when sin was discovered to them.

3. "Indignation"; against sin, expressing their abhorrence of it, and of themselves for it, as Job did, saying, what have we to do with it for the future? being filled with a loathing of it, and with shame and confusion for it; (see Hosea 14:8).

4. "Fear"; not of the punishment of sin, of the wrath of God, and of hell and damnation, which is the fruit of legal and not evangelical repentance; but a fear of offending God, and of his grace and goodness in forgiving their sins, and of him for his goodness sake (Hosea 3:5).

5. "Vehement desire"; to be kept from sin, that they may not dishonor God, grieve their own souls, offend and stumble God's people, and bring reproach on his ways, doctrines, and ordinances; and that they might be indulged with nearness to God, communion with him, and fresh discoveries of his love to them.

6. "Zeal"; for God and his glory, for his doctrines and ordinances, for the discipline of his house, and for the performance of all good works.

7. "Revenge"; not on others but on themselves, and on their sinful lusts and corruptions, and on all disobedience, that their obedience might be fulfilled; striving against sin, acting the part of an antagonist to it, resisting even unto blood, not sparing but mortifying the deeds of the body, that they may live a holy life and conversation. But though these things are in a more peculiar manner applicable to the case of the Corinthians, yet they do more or less, and in a great measure appear in every repenting sinner.

2*ndly*, the consequences of repentance, even blessings of grace, which follow upon it, and are connected with it, being promised unto it, and what it issues in; by which it appears to be salutary, and answers some valuable ends, and is of the greatest importance; as,

1. The pardon of sin; for though this is not procured by tears of repentance, by humiliation for sin, and confession of it, but by the blood of Christ only; yet to those who repent of sin sincerely, and are truly humbled for it, a manifestation and application of pardoning grace and mercy is made; and these two, repentance and remission of sins, are joined together in the ministry of the word, to encourage repenting sinners to hope in Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, who as he gives the one gives also the other (Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31), none that ever truly repented of sin and confessed it, but had his sins pardoned; such as forsake their sinful ways and turn to the Lord, he pardons and abundantly pardons; his justice to the blood and sacrifice of his Son, and his truth and

faithfulness to his word and promises, leave no room to doubt of it (Isa. 55:7; 1 John 1:9).

2. True evangelical repentance, which is God's gift, and a grant of his grace, is "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). It is not by repentance indeed by which men live spiritually, that is by faith in Christ; yet men begin to live spiritually when they are quickened by the Spirit of God, and have repentance from dead works given unto them; and though men by repentance do not procure eternal life, that is the free gift of God through Christ, yet true, special, spiritual, and evangelical repentance issues in eternal life, and is inseparably connected with it; though all impenitent sinners shall certainly perish, who by their hardness and impenitent hearts treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and righteous judgment of God; yet all that come to true repentance none of them shall ever perish, but shall have everlasting life.

3. Evangelical repentance, the work of godly sorrow, is "repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10), it is not the cause of salvation; Christ is the captain, cause, and author of salvation; but the means through and by which God saves his people; as they are saved "through faith", so through repentance, and through both as "the gift of God", flowing from his sovereign grace (Eph. 2:8), as he "that believes" with the heart unto righteousness, so he that truly repents of sin "shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

---

[6] e metanoia aute philosophias arche genetai, &c. Hierocles in Carmin, Pythagor. p. 166.

[7] "Ultrices Curae", Virgil. Aeneid. 6.

[8] "Caeteri autem resipiscere, id est, ad priorem mentis statum. vel ad meliorem mentem redire solent", Vallae Elegantiar. l. 5. c. 3.

[9] Institut. l. 6. c. 24.

[10] "Quem poenitet peccasse pene est innocens", Senecae Agamemnon; act 2. v. 241. Another heathen calls repentance, "Omnium fortunatissimum factum", the most happy deed of all, Terent. Heautont. act 4. sc. 7. v. 1.

[11] Clemens of Alexandria, Stromat. l. 1. p. 310, had a notion that the devil being possessed of free will might be brought to repentance, which perhaps gave rise to the sentiment of Origen concerning the salvation of devils; but, according to Luther, free will is the greatest enemy to righteousness, and to the salvation of men; and if so, then certainly to the salvation of devils, and can be no friend nor of any service to them, Luther de serv. Arbitr. c. 211.

Chapter 5

OF THE FEAR OF GOD

The fear of God has so great a concern in divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it; and a worshipper of God is frequently described in scripture by one that fears him; and particularly internal worship, or experimental religion, as distinguished from an external observance of the divine commands, is expressed by it; for, according to the wise man, the whole of religion, experimental and practical religion, lies in these two things, to "fear God and keep his commandments" (Eccl. 12:13), and as worship itself is expressed by the fear of God, so the manner in which it is to be performed is directed to be in it and with it, for God is to be served "with reverence and godly fear"; (see Ps. 2:11; 5:7; 89:7; Heb. 12:28), concerning which may be observed,

1. The object of fear, not the creature, but God the Creator. There is a fear due to men, "fear to whom fear"; that is, it should be rendered to whom it is due (Rom. 13:7 there is a fear and reverence due to parents from their children (Le 19:3; Heb. 12:9), which is shown by the honour and respect paid unto them, and the obedience yielded them (Eph. 6:1, 2), and the argument from hence is strong to the fear and reverence of God the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:14, 17), there is a fear and reverence in the conjugal state, due from wives to their husbands (Eph. 5:33; 1 Pet. 3:5, 6), and this relation affords a reason and argument why the church should fear and serve the Lord her God, because he is her husband (Ps. 45:11), there is a fear and reverence which servants should show to their masters (Eph. 6:5), and if such masters are to be obeyed with fear, much more our Master which is in heaven; and this is the argument the Lord himself uses, "If I be a Master, where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6), there is a fear and reverence which ministers of the word should be had in by those to whom they minister (1 Sam. 12:18), this is one part of that double honour they are worthy of, to be esteemed very highly for their work sake. Herod, though a

wicked man, "feared John", that is, not dreaded him, but respected him, for he heard him gladly (Mark 6:20). There is a fear and reverence to be rendered to magistrates (Rom. 13:7), and especially to the king, the chief magistrate (Prov. 24:21), and if an earthly king is to be feared and reverenced, much more the King of kings and Lord of lords, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?"

But then men are not so to be feared by the people of God, let them be in what character, relation, and station secret, as to be deterred by them from the service of God; "the fear of man too often brings a snare" in this respect. God is to be hearkened to, served, and obeyed rather than men of the highest class and rank; they are not to be afraid of losing their favour and esteem, and of gaining their ill will thereby, as the Pharisees, who, though convinced that Jesus was the Christ, confessed him not, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God: nor should they be afraid of the revilings and reproaches of men, and be intimidated by them from serving the Lord their God, but with Moses should esteem reproach for the Lord's sake greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; nor should they be frightened from a profession of religion, and from an attention to it, by the threats and menaces of men, and by all the persecution they may endure from them. They are not to be feared who can kill the body, but God is to be feared who can destroy both body and soul in hell; and such who fear men, so as to neglect the worship of God, are the "fearful" ones, who shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 10:28; Rev. 21:8), if God is on the side of his people, as he most certainly is, they have no reason to fear what man can do unto them.

God only is the object of fear, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him"; that is, him only (Deut. 6:13; 10:20), this is the principal thing God requires of his people, and they are bound in duty to render to him; "Now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God?" this is the first thing, others follow (Deut. 10:12 hence because he is so much the object of the fear of good men, he is called "fear" itself; so the "fear of Isaac" is used for the God of Isaac (Gen. 31:42), and by whom Jacob swore (Gen. 31:53), who could be no other than the God of his father Isaac. In the Chaldee paraphrase [12] the word rchl' "fear", is sometimes put for the true God, as well as used of idols; and with some theos, the Greek word for "God", is by them derived from deos, "fear"; [13] and by the Lacedemonians "fear" was worshipped as a deity, and had a temple for it; [14] as Pavor and Pallor, fearfulness and paleness, were by Tullus Hostilius among the Romans; [15] but none but the true God is the object of fear. And,

1*st*, He is to be feared because of his name and nature; "Holy and reverend is his name", particularly his name Jehovah, expressive of his essence and nature; "that thou mayest fear this fearful and glorious name, The Lord thy God" (Ps. 112:9; Deut. 28:58 a name peculiar to him; there is no name of God but is to be revered; and that by which he is commonly spoken of ought always to be used in a reverend manner, and not upon slight and trivial occasions, and with great irreverence, as it too often is, and when at every turn men are apt to say, O Lord! O God! good God! &c. especially men professing the fear of God should be careful of such language, for it is no other than taking the name of God in vain.

2*dly,* God not only essentially but personally considered is to be feared, God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is said of the Jews in the latter day, that they shall "seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5), where the Lord, who and his goodness will be feared by them, is Jehovah the Father, as distinguished from the Messiah the Son of God, and David their king, who will be sought for by them. So in (Mal. 4:2). "Unto you that fear my name", whose name is Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, "shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"; even the Son of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and so is distinguished from him whose name is feared. Jehovah the Son is also the object of divine fear and reverence, "Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread"; that is, the object of your fear and reverence; and what follows shows which of the divine persons is meant; and "he shall be for a sanctuary" to worship in, and a place of refuge for his people in times of distress; "but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence" (Isa. 8:13, 14), which phrases are applied to Christ, and can only be said of him (Rom. 9:32, 33; 1 Pet. 2:7, 8). Jehovah the Father, the lord of the

vineyard, after sending many of his servants who had been ill used, says, "I will send my beloved Son", meaning Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, it "may be, they will reverence him when they see him" (Luke 20:13), they ought to have done it: reverence should be given to him, the heir of the vineyard, his church, the son in his own house, whose house believers are, and therefore should reverence him. Jehovah the Spirit also is and should be the object of fear; the Israelites in the wilderness rebelled against him, and vexed him, and they smarted for it, for "he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them" (Isa. 63:10), lying to the Holy Ghost, which was a most irreverent treatment of him, was punished with death in Ananias and Sapphira; and saints should be careful that they "grieve" not the Holy Spirit by their unbecoming conduct toward him, from whom they receive many blessings and favours.

3*rdly*, God, in his perfections and because of them, is the object of fear; as his majesty and greatness in general; God is clothed with majesty, and majesty and honour are before him, and "with him is terrible majesty", such as is sufficient to command an awe of him; particularly his omnipotence, for "he is excellent in power" (Job 37:22, 23), as also his omniscience, for nothing can be hid from his sight; the most enormous actions committed in the dark are seen by him, with whom the darkness and the light are alike; and his omnipresence, from whence there is no fleeing, for he fills heaven and earth with it; to which may be added, the justice and holiness of God, which make his majesty the more terrible and to be revered, since he is not only excellent in power, but also "in judgment, and in plenty of justice" (Job 37:23; 2 Chron. 19:7), and a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and sin avenging God, the living God, the everlasting King, at whose wrath the nations tremble, and are not able to bear his indignation (Jer. 10:10).

4*thly*, The works of God make him appear to be a proper object of fear and reverence; his works of creation, the Psalmist on mention of them says (Ps. 33:5-8). "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him"; who has made such a display of his greatness and goodness in them, as show him worthy of fear and reverence. The prophet instances in what may seem small, yet a most wonderful thing, and enough of itself to command an awe of the divine being; "Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence? which hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it"; and at the same time the stupidity of the people is observed, who, notwithstanding the goodness of God in his works of providence towards them, yet were wanting in their fear and reverence of him: "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, the former and latter rain in its season; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest" (Jer. 5:22, 24), which, though common providential blessings, yet are what should engage men to fear the Lord and his goodness; and especially God's works of grace should have such an effect upon the hearts of his people, as they have when they come with a divine power; particularly the pardoning grace and mercy of God; "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4; Hosea 3:5).

5*thly*, The judgments of God which he threatens, and sometimes inflicts, and the promises of grace he makes and always fulfils, render him an object of fear and reverence. The judgments of God on sinners are awful to the saints themselves, and strike their minds with fear of God; says David, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments" (Ps. 119:120), not as coming upon himself, but as terrible to behold on others; and these are dreadful and formidable to sinners, when they see them near approaching, who go into the holes and clefts of rocks, and into the caves "for fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth lo shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:19, 21), and nothing has a greater influence on a filial and godly fear in the saints, and to stir them up to the exercise of it, than the free, absolute, and unconditional promises of grace in the covenant; thus after the apostle had observed such promises, strongly urges to "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:16, 18; 7:1).

II. The nature and kind of fear.

There is a fear which is not good nor commendable, and it is of different sorts; there is an idolatrous and superstitious fear, which is called deisidaimonia, "a fear of demons", which the city of Athens was greatly addicted to, observed to them by the apostle when there, to their disgrace; "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious", or given to the fear

and worship of false deities; such is all will worship, worship not founded in the word of God, which brings on a spirit of bondage unto fear; and all such false and vain imaginations which inject dread and terrors into the minds of men, and cause them to "fear where no fear is", or where there is no reason for it; such as the pains of purgatory after death, invented by the Papists to extort money from men; and the beating of the body in the grave, a figment of the Jews. There is an external fear of God, an outward show and profession of it, which is taught by the precept of men, as in the men of Samaria, who pretended to fear the Lord, as the priest instructed them, and yet served their own gods; and such an external fear of the true God Job's friends supposed was all that he had, and that even he had cast off that (Job 15:4). There is an hypocritical fear, when men draw nigh to God with their mouths and honour him with their lips, and their hearts are removed far from him; and when they fear and serve him for some sinister end and selfish view, which Satan insinuated was Job's case, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" and perhaps the same is suggested by Eliphaz, "Is not this thy fear?" (Job 1:9; 4:6). And there is a servile fear, such as that of some servants, who serve their masters, not from love but from fear of punishment; and such a "spirit of bondage to fear", the Jews were much subject to under the legal dispensation; but now saints being "delivered out of the hands" of sin, Satan, and the law, they "serve" the Lord "without fear", without slavish fear and with a filial one (Rom. 8:15; Luke 1:74, 75). And this sort of fear arises,

1. From a sense of sin, and the guilt of it on the conscience, without a view of pardon; thus no sooner were Adam and Eve sensible of their sin and their nakedness by it, but they fled through fear from the presence of God, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden, as yet having no discovery of pardoning grace made to them; for said Adam to God calling for him, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10). Thus a wicked man, conscious of his guilt, flees when no man pursues, and is like Pashur, a Magormissabib, "fear round about", a terror to himself and others.

2. From the law entering the conscience of a sinner, having broken it and working wrath in it; for the law, when it comes with powerful convictions of sin, and with menaces of punishment for it, "it worketh" present "wrath", or a sense of it in the conscience, and leaves a "fearful looking for of judgment" to come, and of "fiery indignation" which shall consume "the adversaries" of God; when persons in such a condition and circumstances would be glad of rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God, which appears to them intolerable.

3. From the curse of the law, and the weight of it on the conscience. The voice of the law is terrible, it is a voice of words which they that heard entreated they might hear no more. It accuses of sin, pronounces guilty for it, is a ministration of condemnation and a killing letter; its language is, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10), which to hear is dreadful when the conscience of a sinner is awakened; but how much more terrible is it, when a sinner feels as it were in his own apprehension all the curses of the law upon him, as he does when "the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy/ smoke against" him, "and all the curses written in the lair lie upon him" (Deut. 29:20), with what slavish fear must he be then filled?

4. From a view of death as the demerit of sin; "The wages of sin is death", the just desert of it; sin is the sting of death, gives it its venom and fatal influence, and makes it that terrible thing it is; and some "through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage", and are under a continual servile fear of it.

5. From a dread of hell and everlasting damnation. This fear is of the same kind with that of devils, who believe there is one God and tremble; tremble at present wrath and future torment. So wicked men, who have a fearful apprehension of everlasting punishment, it appears to them greater than they can bear, as it did to Cain.

But there is a fear of God different from this and opposite to it, and may be called a filial fear, such as that of a son to a father; the scriptures call it eulabeia, and which is rendered "godly fear" (Heb. 12:28), and the same word is used of the fear and reverence of Christ to his divine Father, who was "heard in that he feared", or "because of fear" (Heb. 5:7 his filial fear of his Father which lay in honoring him, in obedience to him, and in submission to his will, even when with supplications he deprecated death; and now a fear like

this in the saints arises,

1. From the spirit of adoption, who delivers the people of God from a servile fear, and gives them a filial one, by witnessing their sonship to them; "Ye have not received", says the apostle, "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father", and so are freed from a spirit of bondage which induces a servile fear (Rom. 8:17). They that fear the Lord are in the relation of children to him; wherefore their fear of him, which he takes notice of and regards, must be a childlike one, arising from their being put among the children, and their sense of it; and which seems to be implied in (Ps. 103:13). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him", where they that fear the Lord in the latter clause answer to children in the former.

2. From the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, which produces love to God again; "there is no fear", no slavish fear, "in love, but perfect love", a sense of the perfect, everlasting, and unchangeable love of God "casts out" such kind of fear; for the true fear of God is no other than a reverential affection for God flowing from a sense of his love; such do not dread his wrath, but desire his presence and communion with him, and say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee" (Ps. 73:25).

3. This filial fear is attended with faith and trust in God; it is a fiducial fear; hence they that fear the Lord and who trust in him, are characters put together, and which describe the same persons; and they that fear the Lord are exhorted and encouraged to trust in him (Ps. 31:19; 115:11). Job was a man that feared God, and yet such was his faith and confidence in him, that he could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; and what a strong expression of his faith in Christ as his living Redeemer have we in (Job 19:25; 1:1; 13:15).

4. It is a fear that is consistent with great joy in the Lord; "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11), and with the utmost courage and magnanimity of mind; it is a fearless fear; a man that fears the Lord has no reason to fear anything, or what any man or devil can do unto him; he may say as David did, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear", &c. (Ps. 27:1, 3).

5. Such a fear is opposed to pride and self-confidence; it is an humble fear, a diffidence of a man's self, placing his trust and hope alone in God; "Be not high minded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20), this is that "fear" and "trembling", or that modesty and humility with which the saints are exhorted to work about or employ themselves in things that accompany "salvation"; as knowing that "both to will and to do", the disposition and ability to perform any duty aright, are owing to the efficacious operation of the Spirit of God, and that it is by the grace of God they are what they are, and do what they do; they that fear the Lord are such who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh", declaring that when they have done all they can they are but unprofitable servants (Phil. 2:12, 13; 3:3).

III. Wherein the fear of God appears, and by what it is manifested.

1. In an hatred of sin. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13), as nothing is more opposite to good than evil, nothing is more to be abhorred; it is to be hated with a Stygian hatred as hell itself, apostugountes> "abhor that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9), and a man that fears God, who has a reverential affection for him, will hate it as being contrary to him, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10), every thing that is evil is hated by such a man; as evil thoughts, which are only evil and that continually; the heart is full of evil thoughts, and out of it they daily proceed, and these are the object of a good man's hatred, "I hate vain thoughts", says David (Ps. 119:113), and now as no one but a man himself is conscious of them and privy to them, to hate them shows that the fear of God is in his heart. Evil words are also hated by him; not only cursing, swearing, blasphemy, and all obscene and filthy language, but every vain and idle word, foolish and frothy expression, which comes out of his mouth when not on his guard, gives him uneasiness, as being displeasing to God, grieving to his Spirit, and what must be accounted for in the day of judgment; as "in many words" there are "divers vanities", the wise man opposes the "fear of" God unto them (Eccl. 5:7), and if evil thoughts and evil words are hated by such, then most certainly evil actions; and not only those of others, as the deeds of the Nicolaitans, the garment, the outward conversation garment spotted with the flesh, the filthy conversation of the wicked, but his

own actions springing from corrupt nature, done by him contrary to the law of his mind; "What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15), evil men and their company are abhorrent to those that fear the Lord, and are shunned and avoided by them; they choose not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and the workers of them; society with them is a grief and burden to them, as it was to Lot, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, nay hateful to them: "Do not I hate them that hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred" (Ps. 139:21, 22; Prov. 4:14, 15). All evil and false ways, not only of immorality, but of superstition and will worship, are rejected with abhorrence by men that fear the Lord, and make his word the rule of their faith and practice. Wisdom herself, or Christ, has set an example, proving the truth of the assertion in (Prov. 8:13). "Pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate"; and wisdom is justified of her children; says David, who was one of them, "I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:128), yea all evil doctrines, which reflect on the divine persons in the Godhead, on the free grace of God in man's salvation, on the person and offices of Christ, and the operations of the Spirit, are the object of the hatred and aversion of one that fears God; he cannot bear them that are evil, neither receive them into his house, nor wish them God speed. In short, everything that is evil in its nature, as sin is in every shape exceeding sinful, a breach of the law of God, contrary to his nature, that abominable thing his righteous soul hates, is also hateful to a good man, to a man that fears the Lord, and hereby the fear of the Lord is manifested by him.

2. It shows itself by departing from evil; "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6; 3:7 not only from open and public sins, but from private and secret ones; Job was a man that feared God and eschewed evil, avoided and departed from it, as every wise man does; yea to depart from evil is understanding, this shows a man both to be a wise man and one that fears the Lord (Job 1:1; 28:28; Prov. 14:16), yea such an one will abstain from all appearance of evil, from everything that looks like it or leads unto it; will shun every avenue, every bypath, that has a tendency to ensnare into it, taking the wise man's advice, "Enter not into the path of the wicked", &c. (Prov. 4:14, 15).

3. The fear of God appears in men in not allowing themselves to do what others do, and what they themselves formerly did; so Nehemiah, speaking of some ill things done by former governors, says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God" (Neh. 5:15). Not that such who fear God are without sin; Job feared God, but was not free from sin; he was sensible of it, acknowledged it, and implored the pardon of it; but they cannot give themselves that liberty to sin that others do, and walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, and in a sinful course of life; they have not so learned Christ, and the grace of God teaches them other things.

4. The fear of God manifests itself by a carefulness not to offend God nor man; such study to exercise a conscience void of offence to both, and would willingly give no offence to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God; and next to God they are careful that they offend not against the generation of his children, either by word or deed, and even to put no stumbling block before any, but fear the Lord their God, for to do otherwise would be contrary to it (Lev. 19:14). Nay, such are not only on their guard to avoid sin and give no offence by it, but they are in an opposition to it; the spiritual part in them lusteth against the carnal part; there are as it were a company of two armies in them fighting one against another; they strive against sin, acting the part of an antagonist to it, take to themselves the whole armour of God, and make use of it against it.

5. The fear of God in men is seen by a constant attendance on the worship of God, and by a strict regard to his will and the observation of it; the fear of God has so great a share and concern in divine worship, as has been observed, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, both internal and external; such who fear the Lord cannot be easy in the neglect of the worship of God, but as they desire to be filled with the knowledge of his will, so to be found in the practice of it; and, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, to walk in all the ordinances and commands of the Lord blameless; and to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole required of man; and such who make a custom of it to forsake the assembling of themselves together to worship God, do interpretatively cast off the fear of God.

6. The fear of God is seen and known in men by

their withholding nothing from God, though ever so dear unto them, whenever he requires of them; so Abraham, when he so readily offered up his son at the command of God, received this testimony from him, "Now know I", saith the Lord, "that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:12); on the contrary, when men keep back a part from God of what he expects from them, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, it is a proof that the fear of God is not before their eyes and in their hearts.

IV. The springs and causes of the fear of God, or from whence it flows.

1. It is not from nature, nor is it in natural men; the want of it is a part of the description of corrupt nature, and of men in a natural state; "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18), it may be said of the heart of every natural man, what Abraham said of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place" (Gen. 20:11), and which may be concluded from the wickedness that is in it, and that by what comes out of it; "The transgression of the wicked", discovered by his words and works, his life and actions, "saith within my heart", suggests this to my mind, speaks as plainly as well can be, it is au observation of David, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes" (Ps. 36:1).

2. It arises from the grace of God, it is a gift and grant of grace; "O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me", or "who will give such an heart?" (Deut. 5:29), none but God can give it, and he has promised it in covenant; it is a blessing of his grace, which he has provided in it; "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:39, 40). In consequence of which promise and covenant,

3. It is implanted in the heart in regeneration; it is put there by the Spirit of God, where it was not before, and where it never could have been, had he not put it there, and it appears as soon in a regenerate man as any grace whatever; upon first conversion there is quickly found a tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, and a carefulness not to offend God; and indeed "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). No man is truly wise until he fears God, and as soon as he fears the Lord he begins to be wise, and not before; yea the fear of the Lord is wisdom itself; it is that wisdom and truth which God desires and puts into the inward and hidden parts of the heart (Job 28:28; Ps. 51:6).

4. The word and prayer are the means of attaining it; the fear of the Lord, as it is a duty, and expressive of worship, is to be learned; "Come ye children, hearken unto me", says David, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 34:11). The law of God, and especially the whole of doctrine both legal and evangelical, is the means of learning it (Deut. 4:10; 17:19), and therefore is called the fear of the Lord (Ps. 19:7, 9), but as a grace it is diligently sought after and earnestly importuned of God; the heart must not only be instructed but united to fear the Lord, and which is to be prayed for (Ps. 86:11; Prov. 2:3-5).

5. It is encouraged, promoted, and increased by fresh discoveries of the grace and goodness of God, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness"; the goodness of God made known, bestowed, and applied, greatly influences the fear him (Hosea 3:5), especially an application of his pardoning grace and mercy, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4).

V. The happiness of those that fear the Lord. There is scarcely anyone character by which the people of God are described, under which more promises of good things are made unto them, than this.

First, with respect to things temporal. Godliness in general, and this part of it, the fear of the Lord, in particular, has the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

1. It is promised they shall have no want, not of temporal good things, "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him" (Ps. 34:9, 10), not of any good thing; that is, which is suitable and convenient for them, and God in his wisdom sees fit and proper for them; and rather than they shall want, he will do wonders for them, and open sources of relief they never thought of (Isa. 41:17, 18; 43:19, 20).

2. Though they may have but little of the good things of this world, yet "better is little with the fiat of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith" (Prov. 15:16), this with the fear of God and with righteousness is better than great revenues without right, and better than the riches of many wicked (Prov. 16:8; Ps. 37:16).

3. Yea wealth and riches are promised to be in

the house of that man that fears the Lord, and that by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life (Ps. 112:1, 3; Prov. 22:4), which can only be understood of some, not of all that fear the Lord; unless spiritual wealth, riches, honour, and life, are intended, since the fear of the Lord itself is the good man's treasure (Isa. 33:6), it is a treasure of itself.

4. It is said that the man that fears the Lord shall eat of the labour of his hands, and he shall not only be happy, and it shall be well with him in his person, but in his family; his wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of his house, and his children shall be as olive plants round about his table (Ps. 128:1-4).

5. They that fear the Lord are in the utmost safety; in his fear is strong confidence, and they have no reason to be afraid of anything; they shall not be visited with evil, yea the angel of the Lord encamps round about them and protects, defends, and delivers them from all dangers and from all enemies (Prov. 14:26; 19:23; Ps. 34:7).

6. The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, or adds unto them (Prov. 10:27), which was always reckoned a great temporal blessing; the wise man says of a sinner, "though his days be prolonged", as they may be, and he not happy, "yet surely", says he, "I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him" (Eccl. 8:12), be their days more or fewer.

Secondly, with respect to things spiritual, much is promised to them that fear the Lord, and they are spoken of as most happy persons.

1. The Lord is said to take pleasure in them that fear him, as having the utmost complacency and delight in them, being his special and peculiar people, his Hephzibah in whom he delights, his Beulah to whom he is married (Ps. 147:11).

2. They are accepted of him, and are acceptable to him; "Of a truth", says Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35), his person is accepted with him in Christ the beloved, and his sacrifices of prayer and praise are acceptable to him through Jesus Christ.

3. The heart of God is towards them; he has a sympathy and fellow feeling with them in all their distresses, trials, and exercises; in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and he comforts and supports them; "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13).

4. The eye of the Lord is upon them for good; "the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him" (Ps. 33:18), not only his eye of providence, which runs to and fro throughout the earth to show himself strong on their behalf, to protect and defend them, and to avenge himself on their enemies; but his eye of special love, grace, and mercy, is upon them, and is never withdrawn from them, but is ever delighting in them and caring for them (Ps. 103:11, 17; Luke 1:50).

5. His hand is open and ready to communicate to them; he "gives meat to them that fear him", spiritual food, the blessings of his covenant, of which he is ever mindful; the comforts of his Spirit in which they walk who walk in the fear of the Lord; he gives them grace, fresh and rich supplies of it, and at last gives them glory; and in the meanwhile withholds no good thing from them, to support their faith, encourage their hope, and engage their trust in him and dependence on him.

6. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; the secrets of his heart's love to them, and of his gracious designs towards them, are disclosed unto them, by which he uses them as his most intimate and bosom friends; and he will show them his covenant, the blessings and promises of it, and their interest in them (Ps. 25:14), what is said of Christ the head of the covenant, is true of all the covenant ones in their measure (Mal. 2:5), to which may be added, that the Lord grants the requests and fulfils the desires of them that fear him, hears their cries and saves them (Ps. 145:19).

7. They are remembered by him with the favour he bears to his own people, with his tender mercies and lovingkindness, which have been ever of old; he remembers them when in a low estate, and brings them out of it; he remembers his promises to them, and fulfils them; "a book of remembrance is" said to be "written before him, for them that feared the Lord" (Mal. 3:16).

8. It is promised to them "that fear the name" of the Lord, that "unto" them "the Son of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). Christ the Saviour shall come and show himself

with a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy; nay, one that "fears the Lord", though he "walks in darkness and hath no light", yet he is encouraged to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10).

9. "Salvation", a fresh view of interest in it, a renewed application of it, as well as the full enjoyment of it, "is nigh them that fear" the Lord (Ps. 85:9), for that is nearer to them than when they first believed, and had the fear of God first implanted in them, and were set a seeking after it, and had first hope of interest in it.

10. Great and good things are laid up for such persons in the heart of God, in the covenant of grace, and in the hands of Christ, and in heaven; even a blessed hope, a crown of righteousness, and things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard of, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of; "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" (Ps. 31:19).

---

[12] Targum Jerus. in Deut. xxxii. 15. & Targ. Jon. in v. 18

[13] "Dictum volunt qeon alii a nomine deoV, i.e. metus", Scapula.

[14] Plutarch in Cleomone, p. 808. vol. 1.

[15] Lactant. Institut. l. 1. c. 20.

Chapter 6

OF FAITH IN GOD AND IN CHRIST

Faith is another branch of inward experimental religion and godliness, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"; and of internal worship, and without which external worship cannot be performed in a manner acceptable to God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him": there is no drawing nigh to God in any part of worship without it; if a man prays to God he must "ask in faith, nothing doubting"; for it is the "prayer of faith" that is availing and saving; if a man hears the gospel, unless the word is "mixed with faith" by them that hear it, it is not profitable; and both a profession of faith and the exercise of it, are necessary to a due subjection to the ordinances of the gospel. As to baptism, "if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest", said Philip to the eunuch desiring baptism; and so for the ordinance of the supper, a previous examination whether a man has faith, and the exercise of it, are requisite to eating of it; and without this a man cannot discern the Lord's body, nor answer the ends and design of that ordinance; concerning which may be observed,

I. The kind of faith to be treated of; for faith is a word of different use and signification, and there are divers kinds of faith.

1. It sometimes signifies the veracity and faithfulness of God; as when the apostle says, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3, 4), yea faith sometimes signifies veracity and fidelity among men, and is no other than a virtue belonging to the moral law, and is one of the weightier matters of it (Matthew 23:23).

2. It is sometimes used for the doctrine of the gospel, the word of faith, which the apostle preached, though he once destroyed it as much as in him lay (Gal. 1:23), and is the faith once delivered to the saints, which they should earnestly contend for, and build up one another in (Jude 1:3, 20), so called, because it contains things to be believed upon the credit and testimony of God; and because it directs to the great object of faith in salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ; and because it is the means of ingenerating and increasing faith in men, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:8, 17).

3. There is a divine and an human faith; a divine faith proceeds upon a divine testimony, upon the authority and veracity of God the testifier; an human faith proceeds upon the testimony of man, and upon the authenticity and truth of the witness bore by him; concerning both which the apostle John says, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater", by how much the greater is his veracity and faithfulness; "for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son" (1 John 5:9), namely, that life and salvation are in him and by him; and to believe this witness, and to receive it within a man's self, is what is commonly called saving faith.

4. There is a faith of miracles which proceeds upon a revelation some way or other made by God to a man, which he believes; either that a miracle should be wrought by him, or should be wrought for him, for his benefit and advantage; of the former sort, and which is called "faith in God" (Mark 11:22, 23), the apostle is to be understood, when he says, "Though I

have all faith, so that I could remove mountains" (1 Cor. 13:2; Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6), of the latter sort was the faith of the centurion, of the woman having an issue, of Jairus, and of the Canaanitish woman (Matthew 8:8, 10; 9:18, 20, 22; 15:28), and of the lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:9, 10). The one is called active, the other passive faith; and this faith of miracles, in the first times of the gospel, was common to good and bad men, to the true disciples of Christ (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:17-20), and to Judas, and to false teachers (Matthew 10:1, 4; 7:22, 23).

5. There is what is called an historical faith, not because it is only giving credit to the historical part of the scripture, which is to be believed as well as other parts; nor because the scripture is read, and attention paid to it only as a common history or human testimony; for men, with this faith, believe it to be a divine testimony, and regard it as such; it may rather be called a theoretic faith, a speculative one, receiving all things in the theory but reducing nothing to practice; or a bare naked assent to the truth of what is contained in the word concerning God and Christ, and divine things; it is a faith common to good men and bad men; it must be and is where true faith is, and there can be no true faith without it; but if a man stops here and goes no further, it falls short of spiritual, special faith, or the faith of God's elect, and is no other than the faith of devils, and of bad men.

6. There is also a temporary faith, which continues only for a time, in some persons, as in the stony ground hearers, "Who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13), this sort of faith differs from the former, in that it is not a mere assent to truth, but is attended with affection, joy, and gladness, as in Herod, who heard John gladly, and did many outward things (Mark 6:20 and in those the apostle speaks of, "who tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5), all of a natural and superficial kind, arising from a principle of self-love, and from the novelty, harmony, and connection of truths, and from a false presumptuous hope of future happiness in consequence of their assent unto them; and so is different likewise from the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, but have no joy; and it differs also from true faith, because it is without the root of grace in the heart, and is loseable, is only for a time, for when trouble and persecution arise because of the word, such who have it, drop their profession of it; whereas where there is true faith, such do not "draw back", but continue "to believe" to "the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39).

7. There is a special faith, which is peculiar to God's elect, and is by some called saving faith, though strictly speaking salvation is not in faith, [16] nor in any other grace, nor in any duty, only in Christ; there is no other name but his under heaven whereby we must be saved; he only is the author of eternal salvation; and yet there are some things in scripture which seem to countenance such a phrase; as when Christ said to the woman who repented of her sins, and had the forgiveness of them, loved Christ, and believed in him, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace" (Luke 7:50), unless the object of faith should be meant; and certain it is that salvation is promised to faith, and connected with it, "He that believes shall be saved", and is what faith issues in; true believers receive "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls" (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 1:9), and this is the faith that is to be treated of; and next will be considered,

II. The objects of it, and acts of it on those objects. The objects of it are not bare axioms or propositions; for, as Dr. Ames [17] observes, the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom but at the thing; for axioms are not formed, but that by them knowledge may be had of things; the principal term to which the act of a believer tends is the thing itself, which is chiefly regarded in the axiom; and so promises are not to be considered as objects unless in a tropical and metonymical sense, being put for the things promised; so the Old Testament saints, "not having received the promises", the things promised, "but having seen them afar off", that is, by faith, "were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb. 11:12), nor even the benefits of Christ, or the blessings of his grace, no otherwise than as they are the "end" faith has in view in receiving him; he is viewed and dealt with as the object of faith in order to enjoy the good things which come by him: or they may be considered as motives encouraging to acts of faith on him, and are the fruits and effects of it received thereby from him. The proper and formal object of faith is twofold, God and Christ; God as the first primary and ultimate object of faith, and Christ as mediator is the mediate object of it, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

God is the principal object of faith (Mark 11:22; Titus 3:8; 1 Thess. 1:8), which act of faith on him is not barely to believe there is a God, and but one; which is "credere Deum", and which the devils themselves believe; nor is it merely to believe whatever he delivers in his word, as prophecies, promises, doctrines, &c. this is "credere Deo", to give credit to God, believe what he says; but "credere in Deum," Medulla Theolog, l. 1. c. 3. f. 15. by believing to cleave to God, lean upon him, and acquiesce in him as our all sufficient life and salvation (Deut. 30:20), and so it is not merely to believe there are three persons in the Godhead, but to go forth in acts of faith and confidence on them, in things relative to our welfare and happiness here and hereafter. And,

1*st*, on God the Father, "Ye believe in God", that is, in God the Father, the God of Israel, as distinct from Christ, for it follows, "in my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:1, 2), and so our Lord further says, "He that believeth on me", that is, not on him only, nor does his faith stop and terminate there, "but on him that sent me", that is, on the Father of Christ (John 12:44 and it is also observed, that Christ was raised from the dead and had glory given him, that the "faith and hope" of his people "might be in God", in God his Father, who raised him (1 Pet. 1:21).

1. On him as the creator, though not only on him as such; so runs the first article in the creed commonly called the apostles' creed, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth"; to believe the creation of all things out of nothing by the word, even out of things which did not appear, is an act of that faith in God which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1, 3), besides, a true believer in God fetches arguments to strengthen his faith in God, for relief, help, support, and supply from him with respect to things spiritual, as well as temporal, from his being the maker and creator of all things; "My help", says David, "cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1, 2), and it is a special act of faith believers are directed to under sufferings, to "commit the keeping of their souls to" God "in well doing, as unto a faithful creator" (1 Pet. 4:19 and so likewise on him as the preserver and savior of men, for he is "the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe"; and therefore saints put their trust in him, the living God, as such (1 Tim. 4:10). But more especially,

2. Faith is exercised on God the Father as the object of it, as having loved his people in Christ before the foundation of the world; that the Father, as distinct from Christ, has loved his people with a free, sovereign, unchangeable, and everlasting love, is certain; "Now God, even our Father, which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation" (2 Thess. 2:16), of which they may be most comfortably assured, and may most firmly believe, by his appearing to them as he did to his church of old, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), by his spirit witnessing it to their spirits, and by shedding it abroad in their hearts, and giving them some feeling sensations of it, so as to comprehend with other saints, the height and depth, the length and breadth of it; by remembering to them his former lovingkindness, the favour he bears to his own people; and by acts of love done in eternity, as choosing them in Christ, &c. and by giving him for them in time, and by commending his love towards them through Christ's dying for them, while they were yet sinners; and by quickening them by his Spirit and grace when dead in trespasses and sins, and all because of the great love wherewith he hath loved them; and by drawing them with lovingkindness to himself, as well as by his word and oath, the two immutable things in which he cannot lie (Isa. 54:9, 10). So that there is good and sufficient reason for the acting and exercise of faith, on the everlasting love of the Father; and what a strong act and expression of faith is that of the apostle with respect unto it; "I am persuaded", I firmly believe it, that nothing, "nor any creature" whatever, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" (Rom. 8:38, 39), this is to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17).

3. Faith is exercised on God the Father, as having chosen his people in Christ to grace and glory from the beginning, from everlasting, before the world began (Eph. 1:3,4; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14) this is the act of the Father of Christ, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2), and this election of God is to be known by the gospel coming not in word only but in power, by being effectually called, for "whom he did predestinate, them he also called"; and by their having the faith of God's elect, for "as many as were ordained to eternal

life believed" (Rom. 8:30; Acts 13:48), wherefore this may be most firmly believed, as it was by the apostle Paul, both with respect to himself and others, for which he blessed God, and gave thanks to him (Eph. 1:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:13), and our Lord exhorts and encourages his disciples to "rejoice because their names were written in heaven" (Luke 10:20), which supposes knowledge of it, and faith in it.

4. God, as the covenant God of his people, is the object of their faith; the covenant runs thus, "I will be their God, and they shall be people"; and this is made to appear in effectual calling, when they who were not the people of God, not known to be so, are openly such; then it is God makes good his promise, "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 13:9), as David did, "I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God" (Ps. 31:14), and so may every believer say, and be assured, that this God is their God, and will be their God and guide unto death, for covenant interest always continues; it was a noble act of faith in the sweet singer of Israel a little before his death, "Although house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5).

5. God, as he is the Father of Christ, so he is the Father of all that believe in him; "I ascend", says Christ, "to my Father and your Father" (John 20:17). So God, in the covenant of his grace, has declared himself, "and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18), and as such faith is to be exercised on him with joy and wonder, saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1), of the truth of which the leadings and witnessings of the Spirit are an evident proof, from whence he is called the Spirit of adoption; "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God", off of themselves to Christ, and by him to the Father, "they are the sons of God"; and who also "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16), so that their faith is grounded on good authority, on a divine testimony, true, sure and firm; this blessing of adoption is revealed to faith, the witness of it is received by it, and so believers become openly and manifestly "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; for to "as many as receive him, to them gives he power", authority, right, privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name" (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12), and henceforward it is enjoined them that in the exercise of faith they call God their father, and not "turn away from" him, by giving way to an evil heart of unbelief, but say to him, "Doubtless thou art our Father" (Isa. 63:16), and they are directed in all their addresses to God at the throne of grace to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

6. God is the object of faith as a God forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin for Christ's sake; and in him he has proclaimed his name as such, and there is none like him on that account; he has promised pardon in covenant, saying, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). He has set forth Christ in his purposes to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for the remission of sin; and he has sent him to shed his blood to obtain it, and has exalted him as a Saviour to give it, and to him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believes in him shall receive it; and he applies it to them, saying, Son or "daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Matthew 9:2; Isa. 43:25). Hence upon such acts and declarations as these, the believer has sufficient ground to make God, as a forgiving God, the object, of his faith, and to call upon his soul and all within him to bless his holy name (Ps. 103:1-3), such an act of faith David put forth on God as a forgiving God, when, having acknowledged his sin, and confessed it before the Lord, added, "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5).

7. Faith deals with God as a justifier; its language is, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33; 3:30), and faith is exercised on him as he that "justifieth the ungodly"; and therefore not by works, nor on account of any good dispositions and qualifications in men; and they come to him not as workers, but as ungodly and sinners, and believe on him as justifying them without works, and that by imputing the righteousness of his Son unto them; "even as David, also describeth

the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:5, 6). Christ of God is made to them righteousness; and they are made the righteousness of God in him; that is, by his gracious imputation of Christ's righteousness to them: and thus God appears to be a just God and a Saviour: just, while he is "the justifier of him that believes in Jesus"; and as such he is the object of faith; what Christ the federal head of his people, in whom they are all justified, said, his believing members may say, "He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?" (Isa. 50:8).

8. The God and Father of Christ is "the God of all grace"; it has pleased him, the Father, that all fulness of it should dwell in Christ as Mediator; he has made large provisions of it, and stored the covenant of grace with it; and is the author, giver, and implanter of all grace in the hearts of his people by his Spirit; and as he is able to make all grace to abound towards them, so he grants them a supply of it from time to time: now as such he is the object of faith; faith deals with him as such, and the believer applies to the throne of his grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help him in time of need.

Lastly, God, as a promising God, is the object of faith, he has made many exceeding great and precious promises, and these are all yea and amen in Christ, and God is faithful who has promised, and is able also to perform; and though promises themselves are not, strictly speaking, the object, rather the things promised, yet especially a promising God is the object faith is concerned with (Heb. 10:23).

2*ndly*, God the Son is the object of faith; which faith lies not merely in believing that he is the Son of God, which is most certainly to be believed; it was not only the confession of the faith of Peter, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God"; which faith, or rather the object of it, is the Rock on which the church of Christ is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; but it was the faith of all the disciples, and which they express with the strongest assurance; "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16, 18; John 6:69 and it was with respect to this article that the eunuch expressed his faith in Christ previous to his baptism; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37), and all things relating to Christ, his doctrines, and his miracles, were written by the evangelists, "that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing, they might have life through his name" (John 20:31), but true faith is not barely a believing that Christ is the Son of God, but a believing in him as such; according to the question put by Christ to the blind man; "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35). "And this is his commandment", the commandment of God, "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ". And again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 3:23; 5:10). Believing in him is a going forth in acts of faith and confidence, and is called "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:28). Christ, as the Son of God, is the true God and eternal life; he is God equal with the Father, and as such is equally the primary object of faith; which is strongly expressed by Thomas; "My Lord and my God!" and therefore our Lord says, "Ye believe in God", in God the Father, "believe also in me" equally as in him, he being equal with him in nature, perfections, power, and glory. But Christ, as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour, is the mediate object of faith, or in and through whom men believe in God; thus the apostle Peter, speaking of Christ as Mediator, being foreordained before the foundation of the world; but made manifest in human nature in these last times for the sake of his people, described by him as such, "Who by him do believe in God" (1 Pet. 1:21). As Christ is the Mediator through whom all grace is communicated to his people, so it is through him that all grace is exercised on God, and particularly faith; "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward", says the apostle (2 Cor. 3:4). So believers reckon themselves "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). Now faith in Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour includes in it the following things, and is expressed by a variety of acts, which show the nature of it.

1*st*, I shall consider the various parts of faith in Christ, or what is requisite to constitute it.

1. Knowledge of Christ is necessary to the exercise of faith on him, for "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" and if they have not so much as heard of him, they cannot know him, and consequently cannot exercise faith upon him; and "How shall they hear without a preacher" to make

him known unto them? (Rom. 10:14). When our Lord put the question to the man who had been blind, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" upon which Christ made himself known unto him, "Jesus said unto him, Thou hast seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee"; his eyes had been opened to see him, and his ears now heard him, and both being true in a spiritual sense he immediately expressed his faith in him, saying, "Lord, I believe", and as a proof and evidence of it, "worshipped him" (John 9:35-38). Previous to faith in Christ, as a Saviour, there must be knowledge of the want of him; as such a man must be made sensible of the sinfulness of his nature, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the just demerit of it, and of the miserable state and condition it has brought him into, out of which none but Christ the Saviour can deliver him; and therefore he then applies to him as the apostles in distress did, saying, "Lord, save us, we perish!" (Matthew 8:25), he must be made acquainted with his impotency to save himself; that his own right hand, his works and services, cannot save him; that if ever he is saved it must be by the grace of God, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, and not by them; he must have knowledge of the fulness and abilities of Christ as a Saviour; he must have seen him full of grace and truth, as having all the fulness of the blessings of grace in him suitable to his wants, whose redemption is plenteous, his salvation complete, he being made everything to his people they want, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and he being just such a Saviour they need, and his salvation so suitable to them, they that know his name, Jesus the Saviour, put their trust in him; and the more ready they are to do this, as they are fully convinced there is no other Saviour; that salvation is in him, and in none else; that it is in vain to expect it from any other quarter from the works and services of the creature, and therefore determine upon it they shall not be their saviors; but say, with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him--he also shall be my salvation!" (Ps. 9:10; Job 13:15, 16). Hence knowledge being so requisite to faith, and included in it, faith is sometimes expressed by it (Isa. 53:11; John 17:3), both in spiritual knowledge and special faith, eternal life is begun, and with which it is connected; and so knowledge and faith are joined together as inseparable companions, and as expressive of the same thing; "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us", are firmly persuaded of it (1 John 4:16), and some of the strongest acts of faith in the saints have been expressed by words of knowledge; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c. I know in whom I have believed", &c. (Job 19:25; 1 Tim. 1:12).

2. An assent unto Christ as a Saviour, enters into the true nature of faith; not a bare naked assent of the mind to the truth of the person and offices of Christ; that he is the Son of God, the Messiah, Prophet, Priest, and King, such as has been yielded to him by men destitute of true faith in him, as by Simon Magus and others, yea, by the devils themselves (Luke 4:34, 41). "Of all the poison, says Dr. Owen, [18] which at this day is diffused in the minds of men, corrupting them from the mystery of the gospel, there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination, that to "believe in Christ" is nothing at all but to "believe the doctrine of the gospel!" which yet we grant is included therein."

Such a proposition, that Christ is the Saviour of the chief of sinners, or that salvation is alone by him, is not presented merely under the notion of its being "true", and assented to as such, but under the notion of its being "good", a suitable, acceptable, and preferable good, and to be chosen as the good part was by Mary; as being both a "faithful saying" to be believed as true, and as "worthy of all acceptation", to be received and embraced as the chiefest good. Faith is an assent to Christ as a Saviour, not upon an human, but a divine testimony, upon the record which God has given of his Son, and of eternal life in him. Some of the Samaritans believed on Christ because of the saying of the woman; but others because of his own word, having heard him themselves, and knew that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world: true faith, in sensible sinners, assents to Christ, and embraces him not merely as a Saviour of men in general; but as a special, suitable Saviour for them in particular: it proceeds upon Christ's being revealed "in" them, as well as "to" them, by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him as a Saviour that becomes them; it comes not merely through external teachings, by the hearing of the word from men; but having "heard and learned of the Father", such souls

come to Christ, that is, believe in him (John 6:45), not the doctrine of him only, but in him himself.

3. Knowledge of Christ as a Saviour, and an assent unto him as such, is attended with love and affection to him; faith works by love, love always accompanies faith, at least follows it; Christ is precious to them that believe; they love him, value him, prefer him, to all others as a Saviour; and every truth respecting Christ is not "barely assented to", but as they receive Christ, they receive the "love of the truth" with him.

4. True, spiritual, special faith in Christ includes in it a dependence on him, trust and confidence in him alone for everlasting life and salvation; it is a soul's venturing on Christ, resolving if it perishes it will perish at his feet; it is a resignation of itself to Christ, a committing its soul, and the important welfare and salvation of it into Christ's hands, trusting him with all, looking to him, relying on him, and acquiescing in him as the alone Saviour. All which will more fully appear by considering,

2*dly*, the various acts of faith on Christ, as described in the sacred Scriptures.

1. It is expressed by seeing the Son; this is one of the first and one of the lowest acts of faith, and yet eternal life is annexed unto it; "This is the will of him that sent me", says Christ, "that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40), it is a sight of the glories and excellencies of Christ's person, of the fulness of his grace and righteousness, and of the completeness and suitableness of his salvation. It is a looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, a view of him as altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. Faith is a light struck into the heart of a sinner whose understanding was darkened, yea darkness itself, till God commanded light to shine in darkness; by which, though first but glimmering, he sees himself a sinner, miserable and undone, without a Saviour, when Christ is held forth in the gospel to be looked at by him; that is a glass in which he is to be beheld, and where he is openly set forth crucified and slain for sinners; and so is the hope set before them, both to be looked at and to be laid hold on by them, who was typified by the brazen serpent set upon a pole by Moses, for the Israelites bitten by the serpents to look at and live (John 3:14, 15). And not only sensible sinners are directed to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, as John's hearers were by him; and are encouraged by the ministers of the word, who show unto men the way of salvation, to look to and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved; but they are encouraged by Christ himself; who says, "Behold me, behold me", to a nation not called by his name, "look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else!" (Isa. 65:1; 45:22), which sight of him fills their souls with love to him, as the most lovely and amiable one, with eager desires after him, and an interest in him, signified by hungering and thirsting after his righteousness, and panting after his salvation. And this sight of Christ by faith is nigh, and not afar off; now, and not hereafter; and for a man's self, and not another; he looks to him not merely as a Saviour of others, but to him as a Saviour and Redeemer suitable for him.

2. Faith is a motion of the soul unto Christ; having looked and gazed at him with wonder and pleasure, it moves towards him; this is expressed by coming unto him; "He that cometh to me", says Christ, "shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me", which explains what is meant by coming, "shall never thirst" (John 6:35), which coming to Christ is upon an invitation given, encouraging to it; not only by others, by the Spirit and the bride, who say "come" (Rev. 22:17), and by the ministers of the word; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come!" and who, through the gospel trumpet being blown with power, and the sound of it attended with efficacious grace, they that are "ready to perish" come (Isa. 55:1; 27:13), but also by Christ himself, who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" (Matthew 11:28), such souls come, being influenced and powerfully wrought upon by the grace of God; "All that the Father giveth me", says Christ, "shall come to me"; efficacious grace will cause them to come, will bring them to him, through all discouragements, difficulties, and objections, and which are all removed by what follows; "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). This coming to Christ as a Saviour, or believing in him, is owing to the Father's teachings, instructions, and drawing; "No man can come to me", says Christ, that is, believe in him, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw

him", draw him with his lovingkindness, and through the power of his grace, and of his divine teachings; "every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me"; yea, this is a pure gift of his grace, "therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:44, 45, 65), and such souls come to Christ in a view of the blessings of grace, of righteousness, and strength, peace and pardon, salvation and eternal life; these are the goodness of the Lord, they flow unto him for with great eagerness, swiftness, and cheerfulness. For

3. This motion of faith towards Christ is expressed by fleeing to him; and such souls that believe in him are described as having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them" (Heb. 6:18), and by "turning to the stronghold as prisoners of hope", that is, to Christ, whose name is a "strong tower", whither the "righteous run" and are "safe" (Zech. 6:12; Prov. 18:10), fleeing supposes danger, and a sense of it; Christ is the city of refuge, the strong hold and tower, they are directed to; whither coming, they find shelter and safety from avenging justice and every enemy, a supply of wants, and ground of hope of eternal life and happiness; and thus being come to Christ various acts of faith are put forth upon him; such as the following,

(1). A venturing act of their souls, and of their whole salvation on him, like Esther, who ventured into the presence of king Ahasuerus, saying, "If I perish, I perish!" faith at first is such a venture of the soul on Christ, not knowing as yet how it will fare with it; yea, a "peradventure", perhaps there may be salvation in Christ for it; as Benhadad's servants said to him; "Peradventure he" (the king of Israel), "will save thy life"; reasoning in like manner as the four lepers did when ready to perish with famine; "Let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die": so sensible sinners, seeing their perishing condition, resolve to venture themselves on Christ; if he saves them it is well, if not they can but die, as they must without him.

(2). A casting or throwing themselves into the arms of Christ, to be bore and carried by him as a nursing father bears and carries in his bosom a sucking child; so Christ carries the lambs in his arms (Isa. 40:11), weak believers, who cast themselves and all their burdens, the whole care of their souls upon him; this sense h'mnhas (Num. 11:12), from whence comes a word which in many places signifies to believe (see Isa. 60:4 compared with Isa. 66:12). [19]

(3). A laying hold on Christ, who is "a tree of life to them that lay hold upon him" (Prov. 3:18), from which tree they may pluck and eat all the fruits of grace and life. Christ is the hope of Israel, and the Saviour of his people; and there is great encouragement for sensible sinners to hope in him, because there are mercy and plenteous redemption with him; and he is in the gospel set forth before them as the ground of hope "to lay hold upon" (Heb. 6:18), he is that Jew who sprung from the seed of David and from the tribe of Judah; and his righteousness "the skirt" ten men are said to "take hold of" (Zech. 8:23), even the robe of his righteousness; which being revealed and brought near to faith, it lays hold upon and puts it on, as its justifying righteousness, seeing the insufficiency of its own, and the excellency of this. Socinus [20] treats such an apprehension of Christ by faith for justification as a mere human invention, and a most empty dream; but the true believer finds abundance of solid peace and comfort in it. As Adonijah and Joab fled and laid hold on the horns of the altar for safety, and under a consciousness of guilt; so a sinner, sensible of its sin and guilt, and of its own incapacity to make atonement for it, flees to Christ, and lays hold on his sacrifice, and brings this offering in the arms of his faith, and pleads with God that he would be propitious to him through it, and take away his sin from him. Faith lays hold on the covenant of grace, and upon Christ the Mediator of it, and upon the promises in it, which are yea and amen in Christ, and on the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, redemption, justification, pardon, peace, reconciliation, and salvation, and claims interest in them. It lays hold on Christ for strength as well as righteousness; "Let him take hold of my strength", to enable him to exercise every grace, perform every duty, bear the cross of Christ, and persevere in faith and holiness to the end (Isa. 27:5, 6).

(4). Faith is a retaining Christ, and an holding him fast; the soul being come to Christ, and having laid hold upon him, keeps its hold of him: it is said of Wisdom, or Christ, "happy is everyone that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:18), so the church having lost

her beloved, and upon search found him, she "held him, and would not let him go", as Jacob the angel that wrestled with him until he blessed him (Song of Sol. 3:4), which denotes not only an holding fast the profession of the faith of Christ, but a continuance of the exercise of the grace of faith on him; an holding to him, the Head, and deriving nourishment from him, a walking on in him as he has been received; a being strong in the grace that is in him, firmly believing its interest in him. It is expressive of strength of faith in Christ, and of great affection to him; for it is sometimes with difficulty it keeps its hold of him when things go contrary, and Christ has withdrawn himself and is out of sight.

(5). Faith is sometimes expressed by leaning on the Lord, and "staying" upon him, "the Holy One of Israel in truth"; and even those who walk in darkness and have no light, are directed and encouraged to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God" (Isa. 10:20; 50:10), where trusting in the Lord, and staying on him, are manifestly the same; faith or trust in the Lord, is a staying or leaning on him for all supports and every supply; so the church is said to be "leaning on her beloved", while coming up out of the wilderness (Song of Sol. 8:5), which shows consciousness of her own weakness, a dependence on his mighty arm, and an expectation of all supplies of grace and strength from him. But,

(6). The grand and principal act of faith, or that by which it is more frequently expressed is, receiving Christ; "as many as received him, even that believe on his name" (John 1:12), where receiving Christ is interpreted of believing on him. Christ is received, not into the head; for not all that say Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but into the heart; for it is with the heart man believes in the Son of God unto righteousness; and in it Christ dwells by faith. A soul made sensible of its need of Christ and his righteousness, and of salvation by him, comes down from self-exaltation and self-confidence, and "receives Christ joyfully", as Zacchaeus did.

Faith receives a whole Christ, not in part only, but in whole, he is "altogether", or "all of him lovely;" [21] the whole of him is, amiable in the sight of a believer, and acceptable to him. As the passover Lamb was to be eaten wholly by the Israelites, no part of it to be left, so faith feeds upon a whole Christ, Christ in his person, offices, grace, and righteousness. "Is Christ divided?" He is not, not in his person; he is but one, God manifest in the flesh; nor in his doctrines; nor from his ministers: nor from his ordinances; where Christ is received all are received.

1. Christ in all his offices. Christ is received as the great Prophet in the church whom God promised to raise up, and has raised up, and sent to instruct his people; and by whom grace and truth, the doctrines of grace and truth, are come, and he is to be attended to; "hear ye him", not Moses, nor Elijah, but God's well beloved Son, by whom he has spoken his whole mind and will in these last days; and who himself says, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than fine gold"; that is, his gospel published by him; and such who are spiritually enlightened in the knowledge of him by the Spirit of God, these receive the love of the truth; truth, with a cordial affection for it; receive the word gladly, with all readiness and meekness; they receive the ministers of Christ, and the doctrines preached and messages sent by them; which is interpretatively receiving Christ himself; "he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me" (Matthew 10:40), And faith receives Christ also as a Priest, and the atonement which he has made; it views him as a merciful, faithful, and suitable one, who has made reconciliation for sin, put it away by the sacrifice of himself, and made full satisfaction for it, and by his one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Faith regards him and receives him as the advocate with the Father, as ever living to make intercession; as always at the golden altar, ready to offer up the prayers of all saints with his much incense; and by whom, as their great High Priest, saints offer their spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which become acceptable to God through him. And faith also receives him as King in Zion; "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6), there seems to be an emphasis on that clause ton kurion, "the Lord"; one that receives Christ, a true believer in him, acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Head, and gives homage to him as such, saying, as the Church did, "the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us" (Isa. 33:22). Christ is received and owned by such, not only as a Priest, but as a Prince; not only

as a Saviour, but as a Lawgiver; they take upon them his yoke, submit to his ordinances, and observe his commands; and walk as Zacharias and Elizabeth did, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

2. Christ, and all the blessings of grace along with him, are received by faith; such as adoption; as Christ gives a power to them that believe in him to become the children of God, they by faith receive this power, right, and privilege from him; and hence we read of "receiving the adoption of children", through the redemption that is by Christ (Gal. 4:5 and because faith receives it, believers in Christ become manifestatively the children of God. They likewise receive the blessing from the Lord, even a justifying righteousness from the God of their salvation. They receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, by and from Christ, by which they are justified from all things, and put it on as their robe of righteousness, and glory in it. By faith they receive the pardon of their sins; as Christ is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to "give" repentance to Israel, and "forgiveness of sins", so whosoever believes in him shall "receive remission of sins" (Acts 5:31; 10:43), and that upon the foot of atonement made by him; hence they are said to "receive the atonement" (Rom. 5:11), by faith they "receive" out of the fulness of Christ "grace for grace", all supplies of grace needful for them; as they want more grace, and God has promised it to them, and provided it for them in Christ; so they apply to him for it, and receive it at his hands; and as he gives both grace and glory, they receive both; grace as a meetness for, and as the earnest of glory: not only do they "receive" the forgiveness of their sins, but also "an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18), they receive grace from God the Father to make them meet for it; and as the Spirit is given as an earnest of it, they receive him as the earnest of the inheritance until they are put into the full possession of it.

3. Christ is received as a free gift; he is the gift of God; "if thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4:10), and an unspeakable gift of his love he is, a gift freely given and unmerited; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), and he is received and owned as such; "to us a Son is given" (Isa. 9:6), and all blessings of grace are given, and freely given, along with him, and received as such (Rom. 8:32).

4. Faith receives Christ in preference to all others; it receives him, and him only, as the one Lord and Head, as the one Mediator between God and man, and as the one and only Saviour of sinners; it chooses Christ, the good part that shall never be taken away, above all others: faith works by love to Christ in a stronger manner than to any creature object whatever; than to the dearest and nearest relation and friend whatever; than to father, mother, brethren and sisters, houses and lands; yea, he that loves any of these more than Christ is not worthy of him. Nay, faith prefers the worst things belonging to Christ to the best in creatures; the believer is willing to do and suffer any thing and everything for Christ; none of these things, as afflictions, bonds, and imprisonment for Christ's sake, move the believer from Christ, and its faith and hope in him; he esteems reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt, and takes pleasure in persecutions and distresses endured on his account; and even reckons his own best things, his highest attainments in knowledge and righteousness, but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and of his righteousness, in which, and in which only, he desires to be found.

Thirdly, God the Holy Spirit is also the object of faith; though we read and hear but little of faith in him, yet as he is God equal with the Father and the Son, he is equally the object of faith as they are; not only his being, perfections, deity, and personality, his offices as a sanctifier and comforter, and his operations of grace on the souls of men, are to be believed; but there are particular acts of faith, trust, and confidence, to be exercised upon him; as he is truly God, he is the object of religious worship, and this cannot be performed aright without faith. Baptism is administered in his name as in the name of the other two persons, and this is to be done and submitted to by faith in him; he is particularly to be prayed unto, and there is no praying to him nor in him without faith in him; yea a true believer trusts in him for his help and assistance in prayer, as indeed he does in the exercise of every religious duty, and of every grace; and besides all this there is a special act of faith put forth upon him, with respect to salvation, as upon the other two persons;

for as we are to trust in God the Father to keep us by his power through faith unto salvation, and to trust in Christ for the salvation of our souls, so we are to trust in the Holy Spirit for carrying on and finishing the work of grace in us, who is equal to it; we are to trust the whole of it with him, and be "confident of this very thing", as we may, as of anyone thing in the world, "that he", the Spirit of God, "who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

III. The subjects of the grace of faith, on whom this grace is bestowed, and in whom it is, in some more in others less, in all like precious faith.

First, the subjects of faith are not angels, neither good nor bad. Not the good angels; they live not by faith on God and Christ as believing men do, but by sight; they are possessed of the beatific vision of God, and are always beholding the face of our Father in heaven, and are continually in his presence, waiting upon him and worshipping him, and enjoy complete and inexpressible happiness in their access unto him, and communion with him, and in the service of him. They are ministering spirits to Christ, always attend him, ever behold the glories of his person and the fulness of his grace; one part of the great mystery, of godliness respecting Christ is, that he is "seen of angels", and being "received up into glory", is the object of their vision continually (1 Tim. 3:16), much less are the evil angels the subjects of this grace. There is a kind of faith that is ascribed to them, the belief of a God, and that there is but one; "thou believest there is one God, thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble" (Jam. 2:19), but then they have no faith on or towards God; no trust in him and dependence on him; they have cast off allegiance to him, and have rebelled against him; and much less have they any faith in Christ; for though they know him, and cannot but assent to the truth of things concerning him, yet can have no faith in him as their Redeemer and Saviour: and therefore they themselves very justly observed, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" they had nothing to do with him as Jesus a Saviour, and could wish they had nothing to do with him as the Son of God, to whom all judgment is committed, and theirs also, and therefore dread him; but faith in him as a Saviour they could not exercise, for he was not provided as such for them; he took not on him their nature; he was not sent, nor did he come, to seek and save them, nor to die for them; when they sinned God spared them not, made no provision of grace for them, nor promise of it to them, but cast them down from heaven to hell, and has reserved them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, to everlasting wrath and damnation; so that there is not the least ground for faith and hope in Christ concerning their salvation.

Secondly, Men only are the subjects of the grace of faith; and, not all men; "for all men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2), that is, special faith in God and Christ; there are but few [22] who have it; there are many who never heard of Christ, of his gospel, and of the way of life and salvation by him; "and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And of those that have heard of him, and of the good news of salvation by him, "they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Rom. 10:14, 16). There are some who do not belong to Christ, are none of his; and which is a reason why they do not believe in him; and is a reason which Christ himself gives, and a better cannot be given; "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep"; they that are the sheep of Christ hear his voice, by which faith comes; they know him spiritually and savingly; they follow him, and yield the obedience of faith unto him (John 10:26, 27). There are some of whom it is said, "they could not believe", because they were left of God to the blindness and hardness of their hearts; and whose minds, by permission, the god of this world blinds, lest the gospel should shine into them, and so they believe not (John 12:39, 40; 2 Cor. 4:4). In short, none but the elect of God become true believers in Christ, and all these do, in God's due time, and through the efficacy of his grace; so it has been, and so it ever will be, until they are all brought to believe in Christ; "as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48), for, the "belief of the truth", of Christ, who is the truth, and of the gospel of truth, that comes by him, is the means through which God has chosen men to salvation; and which is as certain to them thereby as the thing itself; for faith is given in consequence of this choice, and is peculiar to the objects of it; hence called the "faith of God's elect" (2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1), such only are the partakers and subjects of this grace, who are regenerated, called, and

sanctified. Such that receive Christ and believe in him are described as "born of God"; yea, it is asserted, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (John 1:12, 13; 1 John 5:1), whomsoever God calls by his grace with an holy calling, he bestows faith upon them; whoever are converted and turned to the Lord, believe in him; "faith" is one of the "fruits" of the Spirit in sanctification (Gal. 5:22), none but such who are made spiritually alive believe in Christ; while men are dead in trespasses and sins they are "in unbelief", in a state of unbelief, as the apostle was before conversion, shut up in it till mercy is displayed in quickening and relieving them; there must be first spiritual life before there can be faith; hence says Christ, "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26). As well may a dead carcass fly, as a dead sinner believe in Christ, or have any will and desire to it. [23] Such only who are alive see and hear in a spiritual sense, and believe in Christ with a special faith, and shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

Thirdly, those who are the subjects of this grace of faith, it is different in them as to the degree and exercise of it, though it is in all "alike precious faith" as to its nature, objects, and acts; and in such is the "common faith", common to all true believers, of which they have a mutual experience; hence the apostle calls his faith, and the faith of the believing Romans, "the mutual faith both of you and me"; yet as to the measure and degree of it, it is in some more, in others less; see (2 Pet. 1:1; Titus 1:4; Rom. 1:12).

1. In some it is great faith; instances of which we have in the centurion, and in the woman of Canaan (Matthew 8:10; 15:28), and many great and heroic actions are ascribed unto it in (Heb. 11:1-40), though all its greatness, power, and efficacy, are to be ascribed to the Object of it.

2. In some it is but small or "little faith"; in God, and in his providence, for the supply of their temporal wants; in Christ, as to his presence with and powerful preservation and salvation of them (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31).

3. In others it is very little, "least of all"; it is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds (Matthew 17:20; 13:32), and as the apostle Paul calls himself less than the least of all saints, these are the least of all believers; the little ones, as Christ calls them, who believe in him; the lambs he carries in his arms; the smoking flax and bruised reed, the day of small things he does not despise.

4. In these it seems to be next to none, and as if there was none at all; hence these words of Christ to his apostles, "How is it that you have no faith?" and again, "Where is your faith?" (Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25), that is, in act and exercise; otherwise they had faith as a principle of grace in them, though so little exercised by them as scarcely to be discerned; yet little faith, even that which is the least, differs from no faith. Where there is no faith there is no desire after God, nor after Christ, nor after salvation by him, and communion with him; such neither desire him nor the knowledge of his ways; but where there is ever so small a degree of faith there is a panting after God, a desire to see Jesus, and to have fellowship with him, and a view of interest in him: where there is no faith there is no sense of the want of it, nor complaint of it, nor desire of it, and an increase; but where there is faith, though of the least degree, the soul is sensible of the deficiency of it, and complains of its unbelief, and prays for an increase of faith; as the poor man did, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

5. In some faith is weak; in others strong: of Abraham it is said, that he was "strong in faith", and staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but "believed in hope against hope"; these circumstances showed the strength of his faith. But of others it is said, "him that is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 4:18, 20; 14:1). See an instance of strong faith in (Hab. 3:17-19).

6. Faith, as to its exercise, differs in the same individuals at different times; as in Abraham, the father of all them that believe, and who was so eminent for his faith; and yet what unbelief and distrust of the power and providence of God did he discover, as to the preservation of him in Egypt and in Gerar, which put him on undue methods for his security? and in David, who sometimes in the strongest manner expresses his faith of interest in God, and in his favour, and at other times was strangely disquieted in his soul, and ready to imagine that he was cut off from the sight of God: and in Peter, who not only strongly asserted his faith in Christ as the Son of God, but so confident was he, that though all men forsook him he would not; and

yet, that night denied him thrice, intimidated by a servant maid and others!

7. In some it arises to a plerophory (confidence), a full assurance of faith; as it is expressed in Hebrews 10:22 which signifies going with a full sail, in allusion to ships when they sail with a prosperous gale; so souls, when they are full of faith, as Stephen was, move on towards God and Christ in the exercise of it with great spirit and rigor, bearing all before them that stand in the way; being fully persuaded of the love of God to them, and that nothing can separate them from it, and of their interest in Christ, as having loved them and given himself for them; and therefore can say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" and with the church, "My beloved is mine and I am his"; but this is not to be found in all believers; and where it is, it is not always in the same plerophory, without any doubt, hesitation, and mixture of unbelief.

Fourthly, The seat of this grace, in the subjects of it, is the whole soul of man; it is "with the heart" man believes in Christ for righteousness, life, and salvation; says Philip to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart", &c. It has been a dispute among divines, whether faith has its seat in the understanding, or in the will, or in the affections; it seems to possess the whole soul, or the whole soul is in the possession of it, and according to its various actings faith has a concern in each faculty; as it lies in the knowledge of divine things, and presents truth to the mind, and is the evidence of things unseen, it has to do with the understanding; and the apostle says of it as such, "by faith we understand", &c. (Heb. 11:1-40; 1:3), and sometimes the strongest acts of faith, even assurance of interest in Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour, is expressed by knowledge of him; "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25), as it is an act of choice, preferring Christ, as a Saviour, to all others; and of affiance, trust, and dependence on him, it is an act of the will; "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:--he also shall be salvation" (Job 13:15, 16), and neither of these acts can be without love to Christ, and a strong motion of the affections towards him, saying, "Whom have heaven but thee?" &c. Faith works by love.

IV. The causes of faith, from whence it springs, and how it comes to pass that any who are naturally in a state of unbelief, and shut up in it, should be possessed of this grace.

First, the efficient cause is God; hence it is called the "work of God" (John 6:29), which he works by his power and grace in the hearts of men; it is expressly said to be of "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12), it is a very considerable part of the "good work" of grace, which is begun, carried on, and performed, by the Spirit of Christ; and from it the whole is denominated the "work of faith", which is wrought and finished with the "power" of God (2 Thess. 1:11), and it is also called "the gift of God", who deals forth to every man "the measure of faith" as he pleases (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 12:3). All the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are concerned in it.

1. God the Father; as he is the "God of all grace", so of this: "No man", says Christ, "can come unto me", that is, believe on him, as it is explained (John 6:35), "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and except it were given unto him of Father" (John 6:44, 45, 65; see Matthew 16:16, 17).

2. The Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, has a concern in it, it is prayed and wished for, as from God the Father, so from the Lord Jesus Christ; and is obtained through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; nay, Christ is expressly called, "the Author and Finisher of faith" (Eph. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 12:2).

3. The Holy Spirit is, with the Father and the Son, the co-efficient cause of faith; not only faith is given by the Spirit, as it intends the faith of miracles, but the special grace of faith is reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit; and from hence he is called "the Spirit of faith", because it is his gift, and of his operation (1 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:22; 2 Cor. 4:13).

Secondly, the moving cause of faith is, the free grace of God; it is not of men themselves, the produce of their free will, and power; but it is "the gift of God"; a gift of his pure grace, unmerited, and unmoved to it by anything in the creature; hence those that believe are said to have "believed through grace"; it is a fruit of electing grace, and flows from that; the same grace that moved God to ordain any of the sons of men to eternal life, bestows the grace of faith upon them in consequence of it (Acts 18:27; 13:48), and this is owing to sovereign and distinguishing grace, according to which it is bestowed on some and not on others, as it seems good in the sight of God (Matthew

11:25, 26).

Thirdly, the word and ministers of it are the usual means and instruments of faith in the hand of God, and are used by him; the end of the word being written is, that men "might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" (John 20:31), and the word preached is, the word of faith; and so called, with other reasons, because faith comes by it (Rom. 10:8, 17), this has often been the effect and consequence of hearing the word preached (Acts 17:4; 18:8), and the ministers of it are the instruments by whom and through whose word, doctrine, and ministry, others believe (John 1:17, 20; 1 Cor. 3:5), but this is only when it is attended with the power and Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

V. The effects of it, or the various things which are ascribed unto it in some sense or another, which show the usefulness and importance of this grace. As,

First, various blessings of grace are attributed to it; and with which it is, on some account or another, connected; by it access is had unto them, and an enjoyment of them, and comfort from them.

1. Justification; hence we read of being "justified by faith" (Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8), not by it, or through it, as a work of righteousness done by men, for then they would be justified and saved by works contrary to the Scriptures (Rom. 4:2, 6; Titus 3:5). Nor as a grace of the Spirit of God wrought in men; for that is a part and branch of sanctification; and would tend to confound justification and sanctification, which are two distinct things; the one an act of God's grace towards men, the other a work of his grace in them: nor as a cause of it; for it is "God", and not faith that "justifies" (Rom. 8:33), for though men are said to be justified by faith, yet faith is never said to justify them: nor as a condition of justification; for God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5), nor as a motive; for that is the free grace of God; "being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24), nor as the matter of it; that is the righteousness of Christ: faith and righteousness are two different things, and are frequently distinguished; that by which men are justified are the obedience and blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9, 19), but faith is neither of them; faith is a man's own, but justifying righteousness is another's; "not having on mine own righteousness" (Phil. 3:9), faith is imperfect; but the righteousness by which men are justified is perfect, or it cannot be reckoned righteousness (Deut. 6:25), it is not the to, "credere", or act of faith, but the object who, or what, is believed in, that is imputed for righteousness; it is Christ and his righteousness, the object of faith, by which men are justified; faith objectively, or the object of faith, Christ, who is sometimes called faith (Gal. 3:23), he is made righteousness unto them; faith only relatively considered, as it relates to Christ, receives the blessing of his justifying righteousness from him, being revealed from faith to faith, and given to it, and put into its hands; which faith puts on as a robe of righteousness, and rejoices and glories in it.

2. Adoption; faith, as before observed, receives the adoption of children from Christ, the power he gives to become the children of God; and therefore said to be, "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26), that is, manifestatively; faith does not make them the children of God, but makes them appear to be such.

3. The remission of sins; "God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins" (Rom. 3:25), not that faith has any virtue or merit in it to procure it: nor is it for the sake of faith that God forgives sins; but for his own name's sake, for Christ's sake, whose blood was shed for it; but faith receives the remission of sins, as flowing from the grace of God through the blood of Christ (Acts 10:43).

4. Sanctification and purification are ascribed to faith. So it is said of such that receive the forgiveness of sins, that they also receive an inheritance "among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me", in Christ (Acts 26:18), and again, "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9), not that faith has such virtue in it as to sanctify and purify from sin; but as it has to do with the blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin.

5. Eternal life and salvation are connected with faith; yea, it is life eternal to know Christ, that is, to believe in him; nay, he that believes in him "has everlasting life" (John 17:3; 6:47), not that faith is the procuring and meritorious cause of it; for "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord", and faith looks unto the mercy of Christ for it (Rom. 6:23; Jude 1:21).

Secondly, by faith souls have communion with God, with Christ, and with his people, in his word and ordinances.

1. They have access to God at the throne of grace, and can use freedom, boldness, and confidence with him, in asking of him what they stand in need of; "in whom", says the apostle, "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him"; that is, by faith in Christ (Eph. 3:12). Christ is the way of access to God; there is no coming to him but by Christ the Mediator, and by faith in him; faith gives freedom and boldness to speak to God; faith presents Christ's righteousness, pleads his blood, and brings his sacrifice in its arms, and boldly enters into the holiest of all thereby; and goes to God, even up to his seat, and lays hold on him, and claims interest in him, and will not go without a blessing.

2. The inhabitation of Christ in the hearts of his people is through faith; the apostle prayed for the Ephesians, that, says he, "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17), not in their heads by fancy and notion; but in their hearts by faith: there is a mutual indwelling of Christ, and believers in each other; he dwells in them by faith, and they dwell in him by faith; "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him" (John 6:56 that is, who feeds by faith upon him; Christ and believers are not only inhabitants in the same house, and dwell under the same roof, but they mutually dwell in each other by faith, which is expressive of great nearness, intimacy, and communion.

3. Believers feed and live upon Christ by faith; "he", says Christ, "that eateth me", his flesh and blood by faith, "even he shall live by me", a life of grace, which will issue in eternal life; yea, such as thus feed on Christ "have eternal life" (John 6:54, 57), and a most comfortable life this is, which a believer lives by faith on Christ, and so a very desirable one; "the life which I now live in the flesh", says the apostle, "I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20), nor did he desire any other; a better and a more comfortable life cannot be lived in this world; "the just shall live by faith"; not upon his faith; but by faith on Christ (Rom. 1:17).

4. It is by faith that believers stand, and walk, and go on comfortably in their Christian race; "thou standest by faith", in a gospel church state, in a profession of Christ, and in the enjoyment of his word and ordinances: "by faith ye stand"; keep your ground; turn not back, nor are moved from the hope of the gospel (Rom. 11:20; 2 Cor. 1:24). "We walk by faith, and not by sight"; so did the apostle, and so he directs others; "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:6), go on believing in him till ye receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

5. Faith makes Christ precious to souls; "to them that believe he is precious" (1 Pet. 2:7). Faith beholds the glories of Christ's person; the riches of his grace; the treasures and wonders of his love; which render him altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousands.

6. "Faith works by love" (Gal. 5:6), both by love to Christ and by love to his people; the clearer views a soul has of Christ by faith the more it loves him; and the more closely it cleaves unto him, leans upon him, and embraces him by faith, the more its affections are drawn out to him; and the more it feeds on him by faith, and the more tastes it has of him that he is gracious, the more are its desires to him, and to the remembrance of him; and it cannot but love all that bear his image, and partake of his grace; these precious sons of Zion are precious to whom Christ is precious, and are the excellent in the earth, in whom is the delight of such, even such who are Christ's Hephzibah and his jewels.

7. It is faith which makes the word useful and the ordinances pleasant and delightful. Where faith is wanting the word is of no use: "the word preached did not profit them, not bring mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2), the word is compared to food, which though notionally received, yet if not heartily digested by faith, does not nourish; it is only when Christ is held forth, and seen in the galleries, and shows himself through the lattices to faith, that the ordinances are amiable and lovely, or when he is fed upon by faith in them; as the Israelites by faith kept the passover, a type of Christ our passover, sacrificed for us; so believers keep the feast of the Lord's Supper in commemoration of that sacrifice, and when they do it in faith, it is with joy and comfort, and to great usefulness.

Thirdly, there are various other useful things ascribed to faith, as the effects of it: as,

1. It makes not ashamed. It is said, "he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16), after another Saviour, or to lay another foundation, being satisfied

with Christ. In some places in the New Testament the phrase is rendered, "shall not be ashamed" and "shall not be confounded" (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6), such who believe shall not be ashamed of their faith and hope in Christ; or of their profession of him; nor of the reproaches, sufferings, and persecutions they endure for his sake; nor shall they be confounded by any of their enemies; nor meet with a disappointment in their expectations here or hereafter (Ps. 22:5).

2. It fills the soul with joy on hearing the word, the good news of salvation by Christ; so the jailer, on hearing the word of salvation preached, "rejoiced, believing in God" (Acts 16:31-34), and indeed, a sight of Christ by faith will fill a soul "with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8), hence we read of the "joy of faith"; for as faith increases joy does; wherefore the apostle prays that the Romans might be filled "with all joy and peace in believing" (Phil. 1:25; Rom. 15:13).

3. It is by faith that saints get the victory over Satan, and the world, and every enemy; faith holds up Christ, the shield, whereby it keeps off every fiery dart of Satan, yea, quenches them; though he, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; yet the true believer so resists him, being stedfast in faith, that he cannot get an advantage over him, but is obliged to flee from him (Eph. 6:16; 1 Pet. 5:9), and though the world is a very powerful enemy, yet "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5).

4. It is by faith that saints are kept unto salvation, and are saved by grace through it. "Salvation" is the "end of" their "faith", and what it issues in; and they are "kept by the power of God through faith"; the power of God supporting their faith that it fail not, until they are brought "unto salvation", to the full enjoyment of it (1 Pet. 1:5, 9), nor does this at all detract from the grace of God; since faith itself is a gift of grace, and gives all the glory to it (Eph. 2:8, 9).

IV. The properties or adjuncts of faith, which may lead more into the nature and excellency of it, and serve to confirm what has been said concerning it.

1. It is the first and principal grace, it stands first in order, and takes the precedence of other graces; "now abideth faith, hope, charity", which last, though the greatest, yet not as to quality and use, but as to quantity or duration; faith is not only of the greatest importance in duty, service, and worship, without which it is impossible to please God; but it has the greatest influence on other graces, it sets them all at work, and as that is in exercise so are they more or less.

2. It is a grace exceeding precious, even the least degree of it; as it is in the least believer, it is "like precious faith", as to its object, nature, and acts, with that in the greatest; it is more precious than gold that perisheth, for richness, brightness, splendor, and glory; it makes poor men rich, and is more bright and glorious than pearls and rubies, and all desirable things; it is more valuable than gold, because that perishes, but this does not; and it makes Christ precious, or shows him to be so, to them that believe (2 Pet. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2:7).

3. It is but "one"; as there is but one Lord to be believed in, and to be subject to, so but "one faith"; as but one doctrine of faith, that faith once delivered to the saints, so but one grace of faith; though there are different sorts of faith, there is but one that is special, spiritual, and saving, the faith of God's elect; though there are many subjects of it in whom it is, and many are the acts of it, and there are different degrees, as to the exercise of it, yet the grace itself is but one and alike in all (Eph. 4:5; 2 Pet. 1:1).

4. Though faith is called "common" faith, common to all God's elect, yet every man has his own faith; "the just shall live by his faith", and not another's (Hab 2:4). The faith of one man is of no service to another in the business of salvation; and no further useful to another than for imitation and encouragement to believe also; hence we read of "thy faith", and "my faith", as distinct from one another (Jam. 2:18). Christ said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32), meaning his particular, personal faith; not but that Christ has the same regard to all his people, and equally intercedes for them on the same account.

5. It is true, real, and unfeigned (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5). There is an hypocritical faith, which lies only in profession, in saying that a man believes, when he does not, as Simon Magus; and there is a believing with the heart, even with all the heart, as the eunuch did (Acts 8:13, 37; see Rom. 10:9, 10).

6. It is a grace that cannot be lost; it flows from, and is secured by, the firm and immutable decree and purpose of election; it is given in consequence of that, and remains sure by it; it is a gift of God, and one of those gifts of his which are without repentance, is irreversible and irrevocable; it is confirmed by the prevalent intercession of Christ, and which he himself is the Author and Finisher of.

7. It is indeed but imperfect; yet may be increased; as knowledge is imperfect; "We know but in part"; so faith is imperfect; it has its ta usteremata, "its deficiencies", or something "lacking" in it, to be perfected by prayer to God, saying, "Lord, increase our faith"; by the ministry of the word, and by a constant attendance on ordinances; and sometimes "faith grows exceedingly"; (1 Thess. 3:100; 2 Thess. 1:3).

8. According to the apostle's account of it, "it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), it realizes things, and gives them a subsistence, and makes them appear solid and substantial; it brings distant things near, and future things present; it makes difficult things plain and easy, and unseen things visible and gives a certainty to them all.

---

[16] "Salus nostra proprie non nititur fide nostra, sed eo uno potius quem apprehendimus per fidem nempe Jesu Christo", Bezae Confessio Fidei, c. 4. art. 20. p. 51.

[17] Medulla Theolog. l. 2. c. 5. s. 24.

[18] On the Person of Christ, chap. x. p. 79.

[19] Vid. Coccei. Lexic. Col.. 43. Witsii Oecon. Foederam, l. 3. c. 7. s. 22.

[20] Deut. Servatore par. 4. c. 11. p. 239.

[21] klv mchmdym. Cant. v. 16.

[22] "Quae (fides) donum Dei est singulare et rarum", Luther de Servo Arbitrio, c. 92. p. 142.

[23] "Nec minus difficile nobis fuerit velle credere, quam difficile fuerit, cadaveri volare", Bezae Confessio Fidei, c. 4. p. 18.

Chapter 7

OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Trust and confidence signify the same thing, whether with respect to God or men: to trust in men, is to confide or put confidence in them; and so to trust in God is to place confidence in him; and generally in all places where to trust in God is mentioned, the Latin versions are to confide in him; and this being so near akin to faith, if not a part, yet at least a fruit of it, deserves next to be considered. And,

1. What confidence signifies, and the sense in which it is sometimes taken, and to be treated of here.

First, it is sometimes used for a profession of religion, taken up in the name and strength of Christ, and with an holy resolution to continue it, and an holding it fast with courage and intrepidity; which, if supported and maintained, will issue well; hence it is advised not to "cast it away" (Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:35), a profession of religion is not to be taken up hastily, without due consideration of the nature and importance of it, and of the difficulties that attend it, and of the expense a man must be at to support it; to which reference may be had (Luke 14:27-33), and it is to be taken up, not in a man's own strength, but in the strength of Christ, on whom there ought to be a constant trust and dependence for supplies of grace to maintain it; and it should be made openly before many witnesses, without shame and fear; without being ashamed of Christ and his gospel; and without fear of men: and when it is taken up, should be held fast with an holy courage and confidence; to which many things induce; as the consideration of Christ, the great high Priest of our profession; and the faithfulness of God in his promises (Heb. 4:14; 10:23).

Secondly, it sometimes signifies that alacrity in which men engage in any branch of religious service, and continue in it with boldness and intrepidity, exercising faith and hope in God, that he will be with them in it, and carry them through it; as particularly in preaching the gospel of Christ boldly, as it ought to be spoken; thus says the apostle, "Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by rest bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:14); boldness in the ministry of the word is a necessary qualification for a preacher of it; this the apostle Paul was so sensible of, that he desires the Ephesians to pray for him that he might have "utterance given", and that he might "open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel"; and this he did wherever he went, at Thessalonica, and other places (Eph. 6:19; 1 Thess. 2:2). Peter and John, though unlearned men,

were taken notice of for their boldness and courage; who, notwithstanding the threats of the rulers, spoke the words of life to the people; declaring, that they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:13, 18-20; 5:20, 28, 29), and so private Christians, in every branch of religious service, should exercise an humble boldness, and an holy confidence, and a stedfastness in all the duties of religion, knowing that though they can do nothing of themselves, yet, through Christ strengthening them they can do all things; trusting and placing their confidence in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, and not fearing a lion in the way or in the streets; nor solicitous what will be the issue and consequence of their persisting in the way of their duty; of which trust and confidence Daniel and his companions were examples.

Thirdly, sometimes confidence with respect to God in prayer is designed. "In whom", that is, in Christ, "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Eph. 3:12), through Christ the Mediator, and faith in him, souls may come to God with great freedom and liberty, teal him all their mind, pour out their souls before him; especially they can do that when they are under the influences, and have the assistance of his Spirit; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"; otherwise there is a straitness of soul, and saints are shut up that they cannot come forth in the lively exercise of grace; but they may come with boldness and intrepidity to the throne of grace, and ask such things of God they stand in need of, may look up and lift up their face, and show their countenance, as they are allowed, and indeed desired to do; nay, they may have "this confidence" in God, that "if they ask anything according to his will he heareth them" (1 John 5:14), all which arise from faith in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ: it is through the blood of Christ saints have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, and in his righteousness to stand before God with acceptance, and wait in faith for success; and which holy boldness and confidence is consistent with reverence of God and submission to his will.

Fourthly, trust or confidence in God may be considered, as it has a connection with the grace of faith; faith is sometimes expressed by it; "Such trust" or confidence "have we through Christ to Godward" (2 Cor. 3:4), it is at least a fruit and effect of it, what follows upon it; for when the grace of faith is wrought in the soul, it shows itself in trust and confidence in God, even when it has not a full persuasion of interest in him; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him": some make it to be the form of faith, and of the essence of it; and that faith in Christ consists of these three parts, knowledge of him as a Saviour, assent unto him as such, and trust in him, or a fiducial application and appropriation of him as a man's own Saviour; hence it is commonly said by some, "fides est fiducia"; faith is confidence; it seems to be faith greatly strengthened; a strong exercise of it; such as in (2 Tim. 1:12). "I know whom I have believed" or "trusted"; if not a plerophory, and full assurance of it; and such a trust or confidence, which is so near akin to faith, and as it should seem a strong act of it, is what is to be treated of; and since it is so much spoken of in scripture, and so much recommended, and such instances of it, and so many happy consequences and effects of it, it deserves a distinct consideration. Particularly,

II. The objects of it.

First, negatively; what are not the objects of it, and are dehorted from in scripture.

1. Idols; trust in which, and in things belonging to them, may be called idolatrous and superstitious confidence; to have other gods besides the Lord, as idols, to worship them, and yield religious service to them is contrary to the first and second commands; and to trust in them is the height of folly and vanity (Ps. 115:4-8; Isa. 42:17). Such pray unto, serve and worship, and trust in what can neither see them, nor hear them, nor help, nor save them. And as vain and superstitious is the trust and confidence of such, who place it in religious buildings, in temples made with hands; as the Jews, in the temple at Jerusalem; who, because it was called by the name of the Lord, trusted in it, it being the place where they met and worshipped, and in which they confided for present safety and future happiness (Jer 7:4, 14). So the Gentiles gloried in their temples; as in the temple of Diana, at Ephesus; and of other idols in other places. Likewise all superstitious rites and ceremonies, which, though they have been in use, now abrogated; yet, if exercised, and especially trusted in, are condemned, as trusting in the flesh; as circumcision, &c. among the Jews; as well as a multitude of carnal and worldly ordinances among the Gentiles, which had a show of

wisdom in will worship.

2. Men; trust in whom may be called human confidence; and which is not to be placed, no, not in the greatest of men (Ps. 118:8, 9), even not in whole nations, strong and mighty. This was the sin of the Israelites, that they "trusted in the shadow of Egypt" to shelter and screen them from their enemies, and which was vain and unprofitable unto them; therefore, says the Lord, "Trust in the shadow of Egypt shall be your confusion" (Isa. 30:2, 3), all outward means for safety in times of trouble and danger are of no avail, and are false things to be trusted in; "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God"; that is a strong tower, where is safety and security; horses and armies, castles and fortresses, are vain things for safety; nor are they to be trusted in (Ps. 20:7; 33:16, 17; Prov. 21:31), and in some cases the most intimate friends are not to be confided in for secrecy; "Trust ye not in a friend; put ye not confidence in a guide" (Micah 7:5). Neither are men to be trusted in for the health of the body, any more than for the protection of lives and properties; physicians may be made use of, but not to be confided in; Asa's sin was, "that he sought not to the Lord" for the cure of his bodily disease, "but to the physicians"; only, in them he put his confidence, to the neglect of the great Physician of soul and body (2 Chron 16:12).

3. Self is another object not to be trusted in, on more accounts than one; and trust in which may be called self-confidence; as when men trust in their wealth, and make gold their hope, and say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; trust in uncertain riches, and not in the living God; have no regard to divine providence, and a dependence on that; but foolishly fancy they have goods laid up for many years, and promise themselves great ease and pleasure; when that very night their souls may be required of them; and so very true is that of the wise man; "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall" (Prov. 11:18; see Jer. 9:23). Nor should a man trust in his wisdom; since the way of man is not in himself; not even in civil, as well as not in religious things: nor is it in man that walketh to direct his steps; good is the advice of Solomon, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). Nor should a man trust in his strength; not in his natural strength, as Samson; nor in his moral strength, to perform that which is morally good, to do which he wants both knowledge and strength of himself; nor even the good man should not trust in his spiritual strength; since without Christ he can do nothing: nor should a man trust in his own heart; since he that trusts in it "is a fool" (Prov. 28:26), that being so deceitful and desperately wicked, and out of which so much wickedness comes. Nor should men, trust in their own works of righteousness done in obedience to the law of Moses; this is trusting in Moses, and resting in the law, as the Jews did; by the deeds of which there is no justification and salvation; such trust in themselves that they are righteous; but such a man's trust is no other "than a spider's web" (Job 8:14, 15).

Secondly, positively, the true and proper objects of trust and confidence are Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, the true God, the God of our salvation; who is, or ought to be, the "confidence", that is, the object of the confidence of "all the ends of the earth" (Ps. 65:5).

1*st*, Jehovah the Father; both as the God of nature and providence, and as the God of all grace: as the former, men are to trust in him to uphold them in their beings, to give them all the necessaries of life, to preserve them in life, and to protect them from all enemies and dangers, and to enable them to do the work of their generation according to his will. And as the latter, to supply them with his grace, to give them more grace to help them in every time of need, to be their God and guide in life even unto death, and through it, and bring them safe to his everlasting kingdom and glory; and being satisfied of their interest in him as their covenant God and Father in Christ, they may be confident;

1. Of his love to them, and of the continuance of it; as God has graciously appeared to them, and told them that he has loved them with an everlasting love, and assured them that his "lovingkindness shall not depart from them"; they may trust in a promising God, and be confident "that he will rest in his love towards them"; and be "persuaded", as the apostle Paul was, or have a strong confidence, as he had, that nothing shall be able to "separate them from the love of God"; since he has given his word and oath for it, that though he afflicts and chastises them for their transgressions, "nevertheless his lovingkindness he will not utterly take from them" (Isa. 54:10; Zeph. 3:17; Rom. 8:38, 39; Ps. 89:33).

2. Of the faithfulness of God in the fulfillment of his promises; he is faithful that has promised, and will never suffer his faithfulness to fail; nor any of the good things to fail of performance which he has promised; and this they may be confident of, since they flow from his love and grace, are made in a covenant ordered in all things and sure, and which he will never break; and since they are all yea and amen in Christ, most certainly performed in and by him, and for his sake; and since the performance of them does not depend on the faith of men, but on the faithfulness of God; the unbelief of men does not make the faith, that is, the faithfulness of God, of none effect; for though they believe not, he abides faithful

3. Of the grace of God to supply all their wants; of which they may be confident; since he is the God of all grace, the author and giver of it, the fountain and source of it, and of every supply of it; and since he is able to cause all grace to abound towards them, and his grace is sufficient for them; and since he has promised more grace unto them as they need; and has set up a throne of grace to come unto for it; and since it has pleased him the Father of Christ, and our Father in him, that all fulness of grace should dwell in him, that from thence grace for grace might be received; and who is a sun and shield, and gives both grace and glory.

4. Of his power to keep and preserve them to eternal glory and happiness: and of this they may be confident, since be is able to keep them from falling; and his hand is not shortened that he cannot save; his strength is everlasting, and never is any decay of it; and since it is certain that regenerated persons are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"; to which salvation, glory, and happiness, they are called, and therefore may be assured that they shall enjoy it; "faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

2*dly*, Jehovah the Son is the object of the saints trust and confidence: it is said, "Kiss the Son", the Son of God, the begotten Son of God; to whom it is said in the context, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"; to whom worship, honour, and homage are to be given by the kings and judges of the earth; and it is added, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him", the Son of God, the object of the worship and adoration of angels and men; he gives "grace and glory to his people, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"; and then it follows, as before, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Ps. 2:12; 84:11, 12), the Targums or Chaldee paraphrases of which places are, "Who trust in his Word, or in the Word of the Lord", his essential Word; so of (Ps. 34:8, 22; Jer. 17:7; see Eph. 1:12). Now trust and confidence are to be exercised on Christ, not merely as the second and instrumental cause of happiness, as says Socinus, [24] but as the first and sole cause of it, which he denies: being the Author, Cause, and Captain of eternal salvation; trust is to be put,

1. In the salvation of Christ, or in him for salvation: it is said of the Israelites, that "they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation" (Ps. 78:22), but true believers in Christ trust in him as a Saviour, and in his salvation, he being an able and willing Saviour, and his salvation suitable, complete, and perfect; nor is there salvation in any other; and therefore they say, as Job did, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:--he also shall be my salvation" (Job 13:15, 16).

2. In his righteousness: a strong act of trust and confidence in Christ and his righteousness is exercised by the church in these words; "Surely shall one say", verily, or only, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24, 25). Christ is with great confidence and strength of faith called, "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6), and the apostle Paul, disclaiming all confidence in the flesh, and trust in his own righteousness, desired to be "found in" Christ and in his righteousness; the "righteousness which is of God by faith; that is, the righteousness which Christ has wrought out, and which God imputes without works, and reveals from faith to faith" (Phil. 3:4-9).

3. In the grace of Christ, and the fulness of it in him, for the supply of all wants; all grace, and the fulness of it, dwell in him; out of which saints in all ages have received an abundance of grace; and yet there is an overflowing fulness of it in him; and they may be confident that their God will supply all their need from thence; and to exercise such confidence is to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1).

4. In the power, might, and strength of Christ. Believers in Christ are ready to acknowledge their own weakness; yea, even to glory in it, "That the

power Christ may rest upon them", overshadow and protect them; for when they are "weak", as they are in themselves, and are sensible of it, then are they strong, that is, "in the Lord, and in the power of his might"; and trust in him that he will enable them to stand their ground, and to get the victory over all their enemies; they are encouraged, as they are directed, "to trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength"; to help them in the exercise of every grace, and in the performance of every duty; to bear the cross of Christ, to fight his "battles, and to persevere" in faith and holiness to the end (2 Cor. 12:8, 10; Eph. 6:10; Isa. 26:4).

3*dly*, Jehovah the Spirit is also the object of the trust and confidence of believers; as he is the Spirit of grace and of supplication: as the Spirit of grace, they trust in him to communicate more grace to them, to increase what is in them, and to draw it forth into lively exercise: and as the Spirit of supplication, in whom they confide for his help and assistance in prayer, and for his prevalent intercession for them, according to the will of God: and as the Spirit of counsel and might, to direct and guide them, and to strengthen them with all might in the inward man: and faith and trust in the Spirit of God, for the carrying on and finishing his own work of grace in the hearts of his people, is expressed by confidence of it (Philemon 1:6).

III. The encouragement there is to trust in the Lord, and that for all things and at all times.

First, there is encouragement to trust in God for all things.

1. All things are of him; that is, all good things in nature, providence, and grace: all good things in nature; "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25), and all things in providence are at his dispose; "for of him, and through him, and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). And all things in grace; all the blessings of grace; as reconciliation, peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation; "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18), and all the gifts of grace, even "every good gift, and every perfect gift, is above, and cometh down from the Father of lights"; as regeneration, which is instanced in, with all the graces of the Spirit included in it, and come with it; as faith, hope, love, &c. (Jam. 1:17,18).

2. All good things are promised by God to his people; the covenant of grace is "ordered in all things", and is full of exceeding great and precious promises, suited to the cases and circumstances of good men; godliness and godly men have the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"; and not one of the good things which God has promised ever fail; they are always fulfilled; the promises are yea and amen in Christ; they, and the blessings in them, are the sure mercies of David.

3. God keeps back no good thing he has promised, and which his people need, and which he knows is for their welfare; "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"; therefore it follows, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!" that is, for all good things (Ps. 84:11, 12), they are bid to ask, and it is promised it shall be given; God is "nigh" to all that "call" upon him, and will "fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will hear their cry, and save them" (Ps. 145:16, 18, 19).

4. God gives all things freely to his people; they cannot merit anything of him; "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" No man can be beforehand with God: he has nothing but what he has received from him; nor are any "worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth shown" unto them; whatever they have, God gives them liberally, without any regard to any merit or desert of theirs; whether temporal or spiritual and especially the latter; since with Christ he "freely gives all things" (Rom. 8:32).

5. God gives all things plenteously, even with a profusion of goodness; so that the saint, with Jacob, can say, "I have enough", or I have all things; for God, the; living God, "gives richly all things to enjoy"; that is, in a large and liberal manner; for he is "rich" or plenteous in his goodness, "unto all that call upon him" (1 Tim. 6:17; Rom. 10:12). So that there is abundant encouragement to trust in the Lord for all things.

1*st*, for things temporal, the outward mercies of life.

1. For food: the promise is, "Trust in the Lord, and do good--and verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps. 37:3), with food convenient, and sufficient; though not with delicacies, yet with necessaries; "Take no thought therefore", says our Lord, no anxious and perplexing

thoughts, "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink--is not the life more than meat?" And he that has given life, the greater favour, will give meat to support that life, to them who trust in him, and wait for it in a dependence on him (Matthew 6:25; Ps. 37:25).

2. For raiment: and this and food are both from the Lord; and necessary for the support and comfort of life; Jacob vowed a vow and promised, that if God would "give him bread to eat, and raiment to put on--then", says he, "shall the Lord be my God" (Gen. 28:20, 21), and, indeed, having these, a saint has enough, and should be therewith content (1 Tim. 6:8), and for this God should be confided in; for if he so "clothe the grass of the field", in the manner he does, "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30).

3. For the preservation of life; from every accident, as usually so called; from every danger; and from every enemy: and because God not only gives life, but preserves it, he is peculiarly the Saviour and Preserver of them that believe, and put their trust in him; he is their keeper night and day; with the utmost confidence they may commit themselves to God, and trust in his protection from every evil (Ps. 122:5, 8; 3:5; 4:8).

4. For these things may believers pray to God with an holy confidence, believing they shall have the petitions they ask of him; who has raised, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them", their cries and prayers, and supply their wants; yea, if need be, will rather go out of the common course of nature and providence than that they shall want (Isa. 41:17, 18; 43:19, 20), and if earthly parents, "who are evil", know how to "give good gifts" to their children, who ask them of them, our Lord has taught believers in him to reason after this manner, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" And if he will give to them the Spirit, and spiritual things, then much more may they expect earthly and temporal things from him they stand in need of (Luke 11:13).

5. To trust and confidence in God with respect to those things, they may be encouraged by the experience of themselves and others. Good old Jacob in his dying moments expressed, in very strong language, his experience of the divine goodness throughout the whole of his life; "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day--the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. 48:15, 16). David frequently takes notice of the goodness of God to him, in providence, to encourage his own faith in him, and that of others; "Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth!" and from what he had experienced in time past, even from the very dawn of life, he strongly thus concluded; "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Ps. 71:5, 6; 23:6), and every believer may look back on the past goodness of God unto him, and encourage himself in the Lord his God, in expectation and confidence of future favours; for their heavenly Father knows they have need of these things, and therefore will bestow them on them (Matthew 6:32, 33).

2*dly*, there is great encouragement to trust in the Lord for spiritual things; that is, for after supplies of grace; for faith respects present blessings of grace enjoyed, but trust and confidence future ones; and which may be depended on; since God is the God of all grace, whose grace is sufficient for his people now and hereafter; who has promised to give more grace as they want it; and has set up a throne of grace, to which they are encouraged to come with boldness, that they may find grace and mercy to help them in time of need. The covenant of grace is filled with all spiritual blessings, and promises of them, which are sure to all the spiritual seed of Christ; Christ has them all in his hands for his people, and will give them things pertaining to life and godliness.

3*dly,* there is encouragement to trust in the Lord for eternal things; for,

1. God has chosen his in Christ to the enjoyment of them; they are ordained unto eternal life; appointed unto salvation; chosen through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth unto it; and the purpose of God, according to election, stands sure, not upon the ground of works, but upon the will of him that calls; his purposes can never be frustrated and disappointed; and therefore the chosen ones may be confident of eternal glory and happiness.

2. God has made promises of eternal things to his people; to whom the promise of the life that is to come is made, as well as of that which now is; God,

that cannot lie, has promised eternal life before the world began, which promise can never be made void by anything that comes to pass in time; wherefore the heirs of promise have reason to trust in God for the performance of the eternal good he has promised.

3. God has prepared and provided everlasting happiness for his people; it is inconceivable what God has prepared for them that love him; it cannot be said how great is the goodness which he has laid up in covenant for them that fear him; a crown of glory, life, and immortality is laid up safe and secure in the hands of Christ, with whom their life is hid; an inheritance, eternal, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, is reserved in heaven for them, and therefore confidently to be depended on.

4. God has called them to his kingdom and glory, even to eternal glory by Jesus Christ; and his calling is without repentance, whom he calls he glorifies; them he preserves safe to the coming of Christ; for "faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

5. Eternal things are freely given of God; as grace is freely given, so is glory; eternal life is the free gift of God through Christ; and therefore there is encouragement to trust in him for it; since it is not owing to the merit of the saints, but it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Christ, as Mediator, has power to give eternal life, and he gives it to all his sheep; "This is the record, that God has given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son", safe and secure, and may be depended on (1 John 5:11).

Secondly, there is encouragement to trust in the Lord always; "Trust in him at all times, ye people" (Ps. 62:8).

1. In times of darkness and desertion; it is said to a saint walking in darkness, and has no light, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10), and wait upon the Lord, who hides his face from the house of Jacob; since light is sown for the righteous, in the purposes and decrees, counsel and covenant of God, and gladness for the upright in heart, in the gospel, and doctrines of it; and sooner or later it will arise; hence the trust and confidence of the church; "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8, 9).

2. In times of temptation, saints may trust in the Lord, and be confident that his grace will be sufficient for them; and that his strength will be made perfect in their weakness; that he will bear them up, and not suffer them to sink under the weight of them; but will in due time make a way for their escape out of them, and deliver them from them; and as Christ has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help them that are tempted; and whereas he has a sympathy with them, being in all things tempted as they, so he prays for them that their faith fail not; and therefore they have great reason to trust in him.

3. In times of adversity and affliction, God leaves in the midst of his church "an afflicted and poor people"; and it is said of them, "And they shall trust in the name of the Lord" (Zeph. 3:12), believing, that when they pass through the waters of adversity, and fiery trials, the Lord will be with them and preserve them, and carry them through them, and not suffer them to be overwhelmed by them; will make all things work together for their good, and deliver them out of all their afflictions.

4. In the hour of death, they are encouraged to trust in the Lord, and believe, that when strength and heart fail, the Lord will be the strength of their heart and their portion for ever; that he will be, not only their God and Guide unto death, but through it; and that even when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they shall fear no ill; God will be with them, and his rod and staff shall comfort them (Ps. 73:26; 48:14; 23:4).

Thirdly, what that is in the Lord which gives encouragement to trust in him; and that is everything in God, and belonging to him; his nature, and the excellencies of it; all his perfections and attributes; the various names by which he has made himself known; his covenant and promises; his word and oath; his gospel, and the doctrines of it; the methods of his grace; and the dispensations of his providence: in particular.

1. He is El-Shaddai, God all sufficient; and therefore to be trusted in for everything that is wanted for soul and body, for time and eternity. Creatures are insufficient, and therefore not to be depended on; friends oftentimes would help, assist, and supply, but cannot; but God is an help in every time of need, and is a never failing supply, an inexhaustible fountain of all goodness; he has a sufficiency in himself and for

himself, and for all his creatures, who all wait on him, and whom he satisfies with his good things; and his grace is sufficient for his people at all times, in all places, and in all ages; and therefore they have always encouragement to trust in him.

2. He is Jehovah, the rock of ages, the everlasting strength of those that put their trust in him; "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah" (in Jah-Jehovah) "is everlasting strength" (Isa. 26:4), to support his people under all their trials and exercises; to carry them through all their difficulties and distresses; to bear them up under all their temptations and afflictions; to enable them to do and suffer what is his will and pleasure; to bring them on in their journey through the wilderness of this world, and out of it: he has promised, that as their day is, their strength shall be; and which is continually experienced by them; and therefore they have reason to trust in him.

3. The lovingkindness, grace, mercy, and pity of God, give great encouragement to trust in him; "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings" (Ps. 36:7), the proclamation the Lord has made of himself, as gracious and merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (Ex 34:6), is sufficient to engage trust and confidence in him; says David, "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever" (Ps. 52:8).

4. His truth and faithfulness in his covenant and promises, strongly induce to trust in him; he will "not suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips"; to which he has added his oath for the confirmation thereof (Ps. 89:33-35).

5. The experience of the saints in all ages, and a man's own, animate him to put his trust in God; "our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded!" (Ps. 22:4, 5), and having such a cloud of witnesses before them; and such gracious experiences of their own in times past of the goodness of God unto them, they encourage themselves in the Lord their God.

IV. The happiness of those that trust in the Lord: it is often said, "Blessed are they that trust in the Lord!" (Ps. 2:12; 34:8; 84:12; Jer. 17:7).

1. They are in great peace, and will be in greater still; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3), they have peace with God through Christ; they peace in him, when in the world they have tribulation; a peace which the world cannot take away; great peace have they which love the Lord and trust in him; even perfect peace, at least hereafter; for the end of such a man is "peace", everlasting peace.

2. They are in great safety; "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever"; they are like mount Zion, well fortified with the towers, walls, and bulwarks of salvation; and are as immovable as that, fixed in the love of God, settled in the covenant of grace and peace, and secured in the hands of Christ, and can never be removed from either; but will abide in the state of grace until they come into the unalterable state of glory; the Lord is round about them, as the mountains about Jerusalem; a wall of fire about them, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

3. They need be in no fear of any enemy whatever: "Behold, God is my salvation", says the church, "I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2), not of men, the greatest, most powerful and numerous; nor of devils, Satan, and all other enemies, are conquered ones by Christ; he has destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil, and spoiled his principalities and powers; he has abolished death, and made an end of sin; he has ransomed his people from death and hell, so that they shall not be hurt of the second death, and has saved them from wrath to come; and therefore they have nothing to fear now nor hereafter; happy men that trust in the Lord.

4. They want no good thing, nor ever shall; "O taste, and see that the Lord is good", says the Psalmist; "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him! they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Ps. 34:8-10), no good thing is withheld now from them that trust in the Lord; and great goodness, inconceivable and unspeakable, is laid up for them to be enjoyed hereafter (Ps. 84:11, 12; 31:19).

---

[24] Contr. Wujekum, c. 4. p. 559.

Chapter 8

OF THE GRACE OF HOPE

Having treated of Faith in God, and of trust or confidence in him, the next in course to be considered is the Grace of Hope; for it, this order they stand, "faith, hope:--Faith is the substance of things hoped for," and therefore go together; and the same word is rendered sometimes "trust," and sometimes "hope," so near akin are these graces: thus in (Eph. 1:12 what we translate, "Who first trusted in Christ," is in the Greek text, and so in the margin, "Who first hoped in Christ." Concerning which grace, the following things may be observed:

1. The object, ground, and foundation of it, Jehovah, God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Not any creature whatever, angel or man; not the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, as the papists impiously and blasphemously address her, "Salve regina, spes nostra; Save us, O queen, our hope!" Nor any creature enjoyment; "If I have made gold my hope," the object of it, says Job, meaning, he had not; though some have, placing their hope of future good in it, in this life, to the neglect of a dependence on divine providence (Job 31:24), and indeed, have carried it so far, as to hope and imagine, that they are the persons whom God will delight in to honour in the world to come with happiness and bliss, who have had so great a share of it in this; forgetting, or not knowing, that "not many noble are called." Nor creature merits; of which there are none: a creature cannot merit anything at the hand of God; he is not deserving of the least temporal mercy from him, having sinned against him; nor can he give him anything which may lay him under an obligation to him, or which God has not a prior right unto; much less can he merit eternal happiness of him, and so have any hope of it on that account; for that is "the free gift of God through Christ." Nor any creature righteousness, which is the hope of the moralist and legalist, who fancy they have kept all the precepts of the law from their youth, and that touching the righteousness of the law they are blameless, and are not as other men are; and therefore hope for eternal life and happiness; but such hope is like a "spider's web," spun out of their own bowels, and which has no strength, solidity, and substance in it; which, if they lean upon, "it shall not stand;" and if they attempt to hold it fast, "it shall not endure" (Job 8:14, 15), nor any supposed privileges of birth and education, and of profession of religion; as being born of religious parents, educated in the Christian religion, and having some notions of the principles of Christianity; and going yet further, making a profession of faith in Christ, subjecting to the ordinances of Christ, baptism and the Lord's supper, and continuing in a round of religious exercises, and yet destitute of the grace of God in truth. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained" a place and a name in the church of God, "when God taketh away his soul?" (Job 27:8). But Jehovah, the creator and Lord of all, and the covenant God of his people, is the principal object of hope, and the only solid sufficient ground and foundation of it; as David said, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth!" (Ps. 75:50). "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is!" (Jer. 17:7; Ps. 146:5).

First, God, essentially considered, is the object of hope; "Hope in God," says the Psalmist, "for I shall yet praise him" (Ps. 42:11). So the church speaks of him; "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble!" (Jer. 14:8). The grounds of which hope in God are his grace, and mercy, and goodness; he has proclaimed his name, "The Lord God, merciful, gracious, abundant in goodness;" and it is the abundance of his mercy, grace, and goodness, which lays a solid foundation for hope in him, and encourages to it; "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy!" he is plenteous in it, rich in mercy, there is a multitude of tender mercies with him; he takes "pleasure" in those that "hope in his mercy," and his eye is upon them to do them good; and therefore there is great encouragement to make the Lord God the object of their hope (Ps. 130:7; 147:11; 33:18).

Secondly, God personality considered is the object of hope, God, Father, Son, and Spirit: God the Father, who is called, "The God of hope;" not only because he is the author and giver of that grace; but because he is the object of it (Rom. 15:13), by whom Christ is said to be raised from the dead, that "faith and hope might be in God;" that is, in God the Father (1 Pet. 1:21), and Christ the Son of God is called, "our hope," and "Christ in you the hope of glory;" that is, the object, and ground, and foundation of it; which are his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice (1 Tim. 1:1; Col. 1:27).

The Spirit of God also is equally the object of hope, as of faith and confidence; that he will assist in the exercise of every grace, and the performance of every duty; and particularly, that he will carry on and finish the work of grace upon the soul.

Thirdly, the less principal objects of hope, connected with the divine persons, are the promises of God, and the things therein promised; hence the word of God, the word of promise, is represented as the object of hope; says the Psalmist, "In his word do I hope" (Ps. 130:5), the ground and foundation of which hope is in the faithfulness and power of God. The faithfulness of God; "for he is faithful that has promised;" nor will he "suffer his faithfulness to fail;" and therefore the performance of his promises may be hoped for; besides, he is "able also to perform;" and upon this footing Abraham believed "in hope against hope:" the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save; he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and therefore may hope, yea, believe, there will be a performance of whatsoever is spoken and promised by him.

1*st*, In general: things to be hoped for are represented,

1. As things unseen, of which faith is the evidence; and gives encouragement to the exercise of hope upon them; "Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24, 25), the glories of another world are things not seen, so as thoroughly to understand and comprehend, yet hope of enjoying them, upon the divine promise, is conversant with them, which enters into that within the veil (Heb. 6:19).

2. They are things future, yet to come, and therefore hoped for; hence saints are exhorted, "to hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto them, at the revelation of Jesus Christ," when he shall be revealed from heaven, and appear a second time; and therefore are directed, "to look for that blessed hope," the hope laid up in heaven, the hope of happiness to be enjoyed, "at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13; Titus 2:13).

3. Things hoped for are difficult to come at and possess; many tribulations lie in the way to the kingdom, through which men must enter into it; the righteous, by reason of many afflictions, trials, and temptations, are "scarcely saved," though at last certainly saved; and since the "gate is straight and the way narrow," which lead to eternal life; hence there must be a laboring and striving to enter in; of which there is hope: and therefore,

4. Hope is of things possible, or otherwise it would turn to despair, as in Cain, and those who said, "there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices" (Jer. 18:12), but "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing," eternal life and happiness, as well as concerning all things leading on to it; and which will certainly issue in it; and therefore "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Ezra 10:2; Lam. 3:26), at least he has encouragement to "put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope" (Lam. 3:29), or seeing hope of salvation is to be entertained.

2*dly*, the things, the objects of hope, or which are to be hoped for, are more particularly salvation by Christ, pardon of sin through him, all blessings of grace, and the supplies of it for the present life; and things after death, as the resurrection of the body and eternal life.

1. Salvation by Christ: as soon as ever a soul is made sensible of its lost state and condition by nature, its inquiry is, "What must I do to be saved?" and being shown the way of salvation by Christ, and directed to him for it, in whom it is complete, perfect, and every way suitable, it is encouraged to hope in him for it, and say, as David did, "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation" (Ps. 119:116). Salvation, though wrought out, yet the full possession of it is to come; and the difficulties in the way of enjoying it many; and yet it is possible to be had, and therefore hope is conversant about it.

(1). It has been thought of, contrived, and fixed; the thoughts of God were employed about it in eternity; he resolved upon the salvation of some of the sons of men; he appointed them to salvation, and chose them to it through certain means; he contrived the scheme of it in the wisest manner, and settled and established it in the covenant of grace: all which serve to encourage hope of it.

(2). And as God appointed some to salvation, he appointed one to be the Saviour of them, and a great one, even his own Son, his equal and his fellow, every way and on all accounts capable of such a work; he

promised him, he sent him, and he came to seek and save lost sinners; and he is become the author of eternal salvation, and his name is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins, and therefore have they reason to hope in him.

(3). Salvation is actually wrought out by Christ; it is entirely finished, the work is done, and completely done; it is a full salvation, nothing wanting to make it perfect; wherefore, "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him is plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130:7), which includes in it, and secures all the blessings of grace; as justification, forgiveness of sin, adoption, and eternal life.

(4). Salvation being wrought out by Christ, it is in him, and to be had by him, and by no other; so said the apostle Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12), but inasmuch as there is salvation in him, it may be hoped for from him; though there is no hope of it elsewhere; "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jer. 3:23), and in him only; and therefore such who are acquainted herewith, hope in him only, and will have no other Saviour.

(5). Great encouragement is given by Christ to sensible sinners to hope for and expect salvation from him; "Look unto me," says he, "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," men in every quarter of it, and in the uttermost parts thereof, of whatsoever rank, quality, and character "For I am God, and there is none else;" and so able to save to the uttermost (Isa. 45:22), all "laboring and heavy laden sinners," burdened with a sense of sin, and the guilt of it, he invites to come to him, and promises them to give them rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28, 29), and assures them, that he will, "in no wise," upon any account, reject, and "cast them out," but receive them in the most kind and tender manner; and for their encouragement to come to him, and exercise faith and hope on him, it may be observed, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2).

(6). Salvation in and by Christ is to be had freely; it is wholly of free grace, and not of works; God saves and calls men according to his grace, and they are saved by grace, and not of works; not by works of righteousness done by them: but according to the abundant mercy and rich grace of God in Christ: were any conditions required on the part of sinners, qualifying them for, and entitling them unto salvation, they might despair of it; but since it is all of free grace they may be encouraged to hope for it.

(7). Salvation by Christ is for sinners, even for the chief of sinners; as Christ came to call sinners to repentance, so to die for them, and by dying to save them: in this lies the high commendation of the love of God to us; that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8), and this is no small encouragement to such who see themselves polluted, guilty sinners, to hope for salvation by a dying Saviour; and the rather, since he "came into the world to save sinners, even the chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

(8). The gospel declaration gives great encouragement to sinners to hope in Christ for salvation; that he that believes shall be saved; that he that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life: to a soul inquiring after salvation the gospel thus directs, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" (Mark 16:16; John 6:40; Acts 16:31).

2. Pardon of sin through the blood of Christ: this is what is immediately sought after and prayed for by a soul convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment; with David it says, "for thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great!" (Ps. 25:11), so great that a sinner cannot bear the weight of its guilt; so great that none but God can forgive it; and if he should mark iniquity, and insist on satisfaction for it, there would be no standing before him; but "there is forgiveness with him," pardoning grace and mercy with him; and therefore there is encouragement to hope in him (Ps. 130:3, 4, 7), and to come before him, though in the manner the publican did; saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13 or propitious; and there is ground and reason to hope for pardoning mercy, through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

(1). Because God is a sin forgiving God; he can forgive sin, and none can do it but him; and he does "abundantly pardon!" pardons both abundance of sins and abundance of sinners; and all freely; sins of omission and commission, gross and grievous ones (Isa. 43:25), and there is none like him on this account (Micah 7:18). Jehovah has in covenant promised the forgiveness of sins: "I will forgive their iniquity; and

I will remember their sin no more!" (Jer. 31:34 and he has proclaimed his name, merciful and gracious, "forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin," even sins of every sort and size (Ex 34:7), wherefore the greatest sinners may hope in him for pardon.

(2). The blood of Christ has been shed on account of sin, and the pardon of it. God "set" him "forth" in his purposes and decrees, in his council and covenant, to be the "propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins;" to make reconciliation and atonement for sin by his blood, that men believing in it might have the pardon of it; and God has sent him forth in the fulness of time to shed his blood for this purpose; "And his blood is shed for many, for the remission of sins;" and hence satisfaction for sin being made by it, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

(3). Christ's blood being shed, and forgiveness of sin through it obtained, Christ is exalted as a "Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31), and to whomsoever he gives the one he gives the other; so that penitent sinners have great reason to hope in him for pardon, and which they may expect to have of him freely; he gives, and he gives it freely; pardon of sin is according to the riches of grace, and is owing to the tender mercy of God, and the multitude of it.

(4). The declaration of it made in the gospel gives great encouragement to hope for it. Christ gave orders to his apostles, before his ascension to heaven, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations;" to all sorts of men in them, "beginning at Jerusalem," where some of the chief and greatest of sinners lived; even such who had been lately concerned in the shedding of his blood (Luke 24:47), and according to this commission given them, wherever they came they made it known to men, that "through" Christ was "preached unto them the forgiveness of sins;" and in this both they and the prophets agreed and bore witness, "That through his name," the name of Christ, "whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 13:38; 10:43).

(5). The instances of pardon recorded in scripture, and of some notorious sinners, serve much to encourage hope of pardon likewise; as a Manasseh, guilty of the grossest of crimes; a Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ cast seven devils; the woman a sinner, who washed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and loved much because much was forgiven her; Saul the blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious person, who obtained mercy; and many of the Corinthians, described as the worst of sinners, and yet were pardoned and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

3. The blessings of grace, and supplies of it in the present life, and through it, are the objects of hope, and about which that is conversant, and in the exercise of which there is much encouragement; for as long as there is a throne of grace standing, and the God of all grace sitting on it, inviting souls to come to it for grace and mercy to help them in every time of need, bidding them ask and it shall be given, there is good and sufficient ground and reason to hope in him for it; and so long as there is a fulness of grace in Christ, and the communication of it not cut off, as it never will be from his people, they may most comfortably hope, yea, be assured, that their God in Christ will "supply all their need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4:19). And seeing there are such exceeding great and precious promises of grace and strength from the Lord, that their strength shall be renewed; that they shall go from strength to strength; and that as their day is, their strength shall be; there is abundant reason to hope in his word for the fulfillment of it.

4. There are blessings to be enjoyed after death, which are the objects of hope, not only of soul, of its being with Christ immediately, and in a state of happiness and bliss; but of the resurrection of the body also; and of eternal life in soul and body for evermore.

1. The resurrection of the body is an object of hope, and is often so represented; "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead," that is, of the hope of it, "I am called in question," says the apostle; and again, "And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust:" once more, "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:--for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews;" and then adds, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"

(Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8), and the description of the object of hope entirely agrees with it, it being future, yet to come, what is unseen to carnal sense and reason, and difficult how it should be; and yet possible, considering the omniscience and omnipotence of God, and not to be reckoned incredible; it may be hoped for, and there is good ground and reason for it from scripture testimonies of it; from the resurrection of Christ, and from the union of his people to him; and they are represented as "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23), which they have reason to expect, and is worth waiting for, and the happiness that will follow upon it.

2. Eternal life to be enjoyed both in soul and body, is a grand object of hope; and which is therefore called, the hope of eternal life, and hope of glory, the blessed hope, and hope laid up in heaven; all intending the happiness hoped for (Titus 1:2; 2:13; Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:5), and for which there is good ground and reason,

(1). From its being a free gift; not to be obtained by the merits of men, or the works of the creature; but is entirely owing to the free grace of God; "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23), if it was to be acquired by doing, it might be despaired of; but since it is the good pleasure of our heavenly Father to give us the kingdom, it may be hoped for.

(2). It is in the hands of Christ to give it; he has power to give it to as many as the Father has given him, and he does give it to all his sheep; he is a sun and shield, and gives both grace and glory; and therefore it may be hoped for from him; yea, he himself is the ground of it; and is therefore called, "our hope," and "Christ in us the hope of glory" (1 Tim. 1:1; Col. 1:27), whose righteousness entitles to it; and his grace makes meet for it.

(3). From the promise of it in Christ, called, "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:1), and which was put into his hands as soon as made, where it is safe and secure, firm and stable; and which was very early made; "In hope of eternal life; which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" who is faithful that has promised, and therefore it may be hoped for, expected, and depended on; and this is the declared will of God, that "whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40), hence all such persons may steadily hope and wait for it.

(4). From the preparations and prayers of Christ for it; he is gone to prepare heaven and happiness for his people, by his presence and mediation; and has promised to come again and take them to himself, that they may be with him, where he is; and for this he prays and makes intercession, and which is always prevalent, and he is always heard (John 14:2, 3; 17:24).

(5). From the Spirit's work in the hearts of men, who works them for that self-same thing, eternal glory, whose grace is a well of living water, springing up unto eternal life; and between grace and glory is an inseparable connection, and to whom grace is given glory is also; whom God calls, justifies, and sanctifies, he also glorifies; therefore those who are partakers of the one may hope for the other.

II. The subjects of the grace of hope, or who they are that are partakers of it.

1. Not angels, good or bad; not good angels, they are in the full enjoyment of God and of all felicity, they see God, and what is seen is not hope; they are in the present possession of happiness; and so that is not future; nor is there anything about them, or attends them, to make their happiness difficult or doubtful: nor evil angels, the devils; there is a kind of faith ascribed to them, the belief of a God, of one God, at whom they tremble; but have no hope; there is not the least ground and reason for them to hope for a recovery out of their apostate state, or of their being ever restored to the favour of God; for as soon as they fell they were cast out of heaven, and cast down to hell, and laid up in chains of darkness, reserved for the great and last judgment, when they will receive their final sentence and full punishment, which they expect, and have no hope of escaping; hence they said to Christ in the days of his flesh, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29), they have no foundation of hope of salvation by Christ; he took not on him the nature of angels, nor obeyed nor suffered for them, nor redeemed any of them by his blood; these were only men, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation: nor was the gospel, the good tidings of salvation by Christ, nor any messages of grace sent to them; nor any repentance given them; and so no remission of sins to be hoped for by them.

2. Only men, and these not all men; some are

described as, "those without hope," and who live and die without it; and all men are "without hope" while in a state of nature and unregeneracy (1 Thess. 4:13; Eph. 2:12), for however they may feed themselves with a vain hope, they have no solid, well grounded hope; and dying in such a state, they die without hope; and some, through the force of their own corruptions, and the power of Satan's temptations, give into despair, and abandon themselves to a vicious course of living, saying, "There is no hope" (Jer. 18:12).

3. Only regenerate men are subjects of the grace of hope. In regeneration every grace is implanted in the soul, and this with the rest; yea, to this, and the exercise of it, they are particularly regenerated; for, "according to the abundant mercy of God," souls are by him, "begotten again unto a lively hope" (1 Pet. 1:3), hence when first quickened by the Spirit and grace of God, and see themselves lost and undone, in a captive state, and as it were, prisoners to sin, Satan, and the law; they are yet "prisoners of hope," and are enabled to hope for deliverance; and are directed to "turn to the strong hold," Christ, where they find salvation, safety, and comfort.

4. Believers in Christ are partakers of this grace, and they only; faith and hope always go together; they are implanted at the same time, and grow up and thrive together; though one may be in exercise before the other; and one may be more in exercise at one time than the other; yet they are always together, and assist each other; Abraham "believed in hope against hope;" and the "experience" of faith, works or exercises "hope;" hence we read of them together; "That your faith and hope might be in God: now abideth faith, hope, charity," or "love" (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13), faith is the ground work of hope, lies at the bottom of it, and is its support; "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1).

5. They are the Israel of the Lord, whose hope the Lord is; and who are encouraged to hope in him, and do, even the whole Israel of God; his spiritual Israel, Jews and Gentiles, sooner or later, hope in the Lord; the Israel whom God has chosen for his peculiar treasure, and whom he has redeemed from all iniquity, and effectually calls by his grace, and who appear in due time to be Israelites indeed; and even all sensible sinners, who are quickened and born again, come under this character, and are encouraged to hope in the Lord for mercy and salvation; "Let Israel hope in the Lord" (Ps. 130:7), hence he is called, "The hope of Israel" (Jer. 14:8).

6. The separate souls of saints, after death, in heaven, seem to be possessed of, and to be in the exercise of, the grace of hope, particularly with respect to the resurrection of their bodies; as "the flesh" of Christ, by a figure, is said to rest in hope of its resurrection, that is, his soul rested or waited in hope of the resurrection of his body, while in the grave, being confident of it (Ps. 16:9), so the souls of the saints, while in a separate state in heaven, and during the abode of their bodies in the grave, rest, wait, and hope for the resurrection of them; and this may be what Job has a reference to when he says, "If a man die shall he live again?" He shall, in the resurrection morn; "All the days of my appointed time" of lying in the grave, "will I wait till my change come," until Christ changes the vile bodies of his people, and makes them like his glorious one (Job 14:14), and something of this kind may be observed in the answer to the souls under the altar, crying, "How long, O Lord," &c. to whom it was said, that they should "rest yet for a little season," be still and quiet, hope and wait, "until their fellow servants and brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:9-11).

III. The causes of the grace of hope, or from whence it springs; and the rather this should be inquired into, because all men in a state of nature are without it.

1. The efficient cause of it is God; hence he is called, "the God of hope" (Rom. 15:13), not only because he is the object of it, but because he is the author of it; even God, Father, Son, and Spirit. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who begets men again to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance; and this is owing to the virtue of the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3), and indeed it is the gift both of the Father and of Christ; "now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath given us good hope through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16), and as it is "through the power of the Holy Ghost" that saints "abound in hope," in the exercise of the grace of hope; it may well be thought that it is by this same power that it is first produced in them (Rom. 15:13).

2. The moving cause of it is the grace and mercy

of God; hence it is called, "good hope through grace:" it is not of nature; for it is not naturally in men; but is owing to the grace of God, it is not through the merits of men, nor any motives in them; but entirely through the grace of God, it is "given;" it is a gift of free grace, and is sometimes ascribed to the "abundant mercy" of God, as the spring of it (1 Pet. 1:3), it is owing to mercy, and to the aboundings of mercy.

3. The gospel is the means of it, by which it is wrought, encouraged, and confirmed, and therefore called, "the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23), the doctrines of it greatly animate to it, the good news and glad tidings the gospel brings of free and complete salvation by Christ, of full pardon of sin by his blood, of peace, reconciliation, and atonement by his sacrifice, and of the fulness of grace that is in him, give great encouragement to hope in the Lord, as do the many exceeding great and precious promises in it; by means of which the "heirs of promise have strong consolation" (Heb. 6:18), these are that "on which God causes his people to hope," what are the ground and foundation of it, support it, and encourage to the exercise of it (Ps. 119:49).

4. There are many things which serve to promote and increase it; the whole scripture has a tendency thereunto, which is written that men, "through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope" (Rom. 15:4), particularly the promises contained in it; and the goodness, power, and faithfulness of God displayed both in making and fulfilling them; and especially when opened and applied by the Holy Spirit of promise, serve greatly to cherish the grace of hope; the things said concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at the right hand of God, intercession for his people, and the glorification of him in heaven, are all subservient to this end, "that our faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. 1:21), the experience of the saints in all ages, of the grace, goodness, &c. of God, and particularly the saints own experience of the same in times past, greatly strengthen the grace of hope, and encourage to the exercise of it; "experience, hope;" that is, works it, exercises it, and tends to increase it (Rom. 5:4).

IV. The effects of hope; which are produced through it, and follow upon it.

1. It is said of it, that it "maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5), the reason given of which is, because the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of such who have it, which supports it and gives it life and vigor; so that a soul possessed of it is not ashamed to appear before God and men; is not ashamed in his present circumstances; nor will be ashamed at the coming of Christ: this grace makes not ashamed, because it does not disappoint those that have it, who will most certainly enjoy the things that are hoped for: and as this grace makes not ashamed, those who have it need not be ashamed of it; as David prays, "Let me not be ashamed of my hope" (Ps. 119:116), when hope is a good one, he that has it has no reason to be ashamed of it; nor will he.

2. It weans from the world, and the things of it, and makes a man esteem them lightly, when he knows that he has in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God; when he seeks those things that are above, and has hope of enjoying them, his affections are drawn off of things on earth, and are set on things in heaven; and he longs to be unclothed, that he might be clothed upon with his house from heaven, and chooses rather to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord.

3. It carries cheerfully through all the difficulties of this life, and makes hard things sit easy; whereas, if "in this life only saints had hope," they would be "of all men the most miserable;" but hope of a future state of happiness beyond the grave bears them up under all the troubles of the present state, and carries them comfortably through them, so that they glory in tribulations (Rom. 5:3-5).

4. It yields support in death; for "the righteous hath hope in his death" (Prov. 14:32), not founded on his own righteousness, but on the righteousness of Christ; a hope of being with Christ for ever, and of enjoying eternal life and happiness with him; and which gives him peace and joy in his last moments, and causes him to exult in the view of death and the grave. There are many other fruits and effects of a good hope; some of which may be gathered from what follows under the next point.

V. The properties and epithets of the grace of hope; which will more fully show the nature, excellency, and usefulness of it.

First, it is called a good hope; "and hath given us--

good hope through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16).

1. In distinction from, and in opposition to, a bad one. A bad one is that which is the hope of the moralist and legalist, which is founded on their own works of righteousness and deeds, done in obedience to the law; and is but a sandy foundation to build an hope of eternal salvation upon; and such is the hope of a carnal and external professor of religion, which is laid on birth privileges, education principles, a bare profession of religion, subjection to external ordinances, and a performance of a round of duties; and the hope of a profane sinner, formed upon the absolute mercy of God, without any regard to the merits, blood, and righteousness of Christ.

2. A good hope is that which has God, his grace and promises, for its object, Christ and his righteousness for its foundation, the Spirit of grace for its author, and is a part of the good work of grace begun upon the soul, and is an hope of good things to come, of which Christ is the high priest: in this, hope differs from expectation; hope is an expectation of good things; and he that fears expects, but he does not expect good things, for fear is an expectation of evil things; but hope is of good things; wicked men expect things which have no substance and solidity in them, and their hope perishes. [25]

3. A good hope is that which is of great use both in life and death; it is the Christian sailor's anchor, and the Christian soldier's helmet; it carries through all the troubles in life, as before observed, and supports in the hour of death; while the hope of the hypocrite is like the giving up of the ghost, and expires with him; this continues, and the man that has it is saved eternally; for "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24).

Secondly, it is also a "lively" or "living" one (1 Pet. 1:3). So called,

1. Because the subject of it is a living man, one spiritually alive: a man dead in trespasses and sins is without hope; but a man regenerated and quickened by the Spirit of God is begotten again to a lively hope.

2. Because it has for its object eternal life: one that is justified by the grace of God, is made an "heir according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

3. Has for its ground and foundation a living Christ, and not dead works; as faith lives upon a crucified Christ, hope receives its virtue and rigor from the resurrection of Christ; Christ, as risen, and at the right hand of God, greatly encourages to seek and hope for things above, where he is.

4. It is of a cheering and enlivening nature; "hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12), it causes gladness and joy; hence we read of the "rejoicing of the hope," and of "rejoicing in hope" (Heb. 3:6; Rom. 5:2; Prov. 10:28).

5. It is an abiding, ever living grace, and is always more or less in exercise; as water that is always flowing and running is called "living water;" this grace is lively or living when others seem to be ready to die; and though it is sometimes in a low state itself, and a man puts his mouth in the dust, "if so be there may be hope," yet still there is hope; and when he is in the worst case, a saint cannot give up his hope; nor will he part with it for all the world; it is one of the abiding graces (1 Cor. 13:13).

Thirdly, it is represented as of a purifying nature; "every man that hath this hope in him," of appearing with Christ, and being like him, and seeing him as he is, "purifieth himself even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3), that is, as Christ is pure: all men are by nature and through sin impure: no man can purify himself by any thing that he can do; it is peculiar to the blood of Jesus to cleanse from sin. Neither faith, nor hope, nor any other grace, have such virtue in them as to make a man pure from his sin; no otherwise can they purify from it, but as they deal with the blood of Christ; and he that has hope in the blood and righteousness of Christ for justification and salvation, and expresses it, does thereby declare that he is righteous, as Christ is righteous (1 John 3:7), being made the righteousness of God in him.

Fourthly, hope is sometimes compared to an anchor, because of its great usefulness to the Christian in this life; "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19), this world is a sea; the church, and so every believer, is like a ship sailing on it; Christ is the pilot that guides it; hope is the anchor of it; and a good hope is like an anchor cast on a good foundation, where remaining fixed, it is sure and steadfast; and as the ground on which an anchor is cast is out of sight; so Christ, on which hope is fixed, is unseen; as are also the glories of a future state, it is concerned with; and as an anchor is of no service without a cable; so not hope without

faith; which is the substance and support of it: a ship when at anchor is kept steady by it; so a soul by hope: none of the things it meets with, afflictions, troubles, and temptations, can move it from the hope of the gospel, from the service and cause of Christ; but it remains steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. In some things hope and an anchor disagree; an anchor is not of so much use in storms and tempests at sea as when in a calm, or in danger near rocks and shores; but hope is of use when the soul is in a storm sadly ruffled, discomposed, disquieted, and tossed about with sin, temptation, and trouble; hence David, in such a spiritual storm, cast out the anchor of hope; "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God!" (Ps. 42:11), and says the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 17:17). "Thou art my hope in the day of evil." A cable may be cut or broke, and so the anchor useless; but faith, which is that to hope as the cable is to the anchor, will never fail, can never be destroyed; an anchor is cast on what is below, on ground underneath; but hope has for its objects things above where Jesus is; when a vessel is at anchor it continues where it is, it moves not forward; but a soul, when it abounds in the exercise of the grace of hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, it is moving upwards, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and enters into that within the veil; and what gives it the preference is, that it is "the anchor of the soul," and its epithets, sure and steadfast, serve to recommend it; and which certainty and steadfastness of it arise from the author, object, ground, and foundation of it.

Fifthly, hope of salvation by Christ is compared to an helmet; "and for an helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8), this is a piece of armour that is a defence of the head, a cover of it in the day of battle, and an erector of it: of such use is hope of salvation by Christ; it serves to defend the head from false doctrines; a man whose hope of salvation is fixed on Christ, cannot give into errors contrary to the proper Deity and eternal Sonship of Christ, to justification by his righteousness and atonement, and satisfaction by his sacrifice; for these take away the foundation of his hope; and therefore he whose hope is sure and steadfast cannot easily be carried away with various and strange doctrines, nor with every wind of doctrine. Hope of salvation by Christ is like an helmet which covers the head in the day of battle; it makes a man courageous to fight the Lord's battles, and fear no enemy; to engage even with principalities and powers, having on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, and particularly having such an helmet, an enemy cannot hurt his head, or give him a mortal wound on it. Hope, like an helmet, is an erector or lifter up of the head; in the midst of difficulties hope keeps the head above water, above the fear of danger; so that the hoping, believing soul, can even glory in tribulation (Rom. 5:3).

---

[25] Suidas in voce, elpis.

Chapter 9

OF THE GRACE OF LOVE

After faith and hope follows love; for in this order they stand, "now abide faith, hope, charity," or love, "these three" (1 Cor. 13:13), "but the greatest of these is charity," or "love;" not that it is of greater use than the other; faith is of more use to the believer himself, and such things are ascribed to it as cannot be ascribed to love; but love is more diffusive of its benefits to others, and is of a longer duration. Love, in order of nature, follows faith and hope, as the effect its own cause, as Dr. Ames observes; for because by faith and hope we taste how good the Lord is, therefore we love him. Faith receives and embraces the promises of eternal life; and hope, on that, is entertained of enjoying it, and waits for it; hence flows love to God, who has promised it, and gives hope of it; faith spies it in the promise, and hope rejoices in it; and both attract the affections to God, the giver of it. Of which grace of love there are these three principal branches, and to be treated of, love to God, love to Christ, and love to the saints.

1. Love to God, Jehovah, our God, the one Lord; "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might:" this is what God requires of his people, and enjoins as a command to be obeyed; and it is but reasonable service; "What doth the Lord thou God require of thee--but to love him?" and says Moses in his name, "I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God"

(Deut. 6:4,5; 10:12; 30:16), and this is the chief and principal, the first and greatest command, and entirely agreeable to the law and light of nature and reason. In answer to the lawyer's question; "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Said our Lord, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:36-38), hence the apostle says, "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Concerning which love as a grace, for though it is a command to love, it is of grace to keep it, may be observed,

First, on what account God is to be loved, and is loved by his saints.

1. For himself; because of his own nature, and the perfections of it, which render him amiable and lovely, and worthy of our strongest love and affection; as these are displayed in the works of creation and providence, and especially of grace, redemption, and salvation; to all which the Psalmist has respect when he says, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name," nature, and perfections, "in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1), as God is great in himself, and greatly to be praised! great, and greatly to be feared; so great, and greatly to be loved, for what he is in himself; and this is the purest and most perfect love of a creature towards God; for if we love him only for his goodness to us, it is loving ourselves rather than him; at least, a loving him for ourselves; and so a loving ourselves more than him: indeed, such is our weakness and imperfection, that we cannot come at a view of the divine perfections, but by these means, through which they, and particularly his goodness and kindness, are made known unto us, and with which we are first and chiefly affected; yet hereby we are led into a view of his nature and perfections, and to love him for the sake of himself; which love, though it is not first in order, it is chief and ultimate, and comes nearest to the love which the divine Persons bear to each other, and to that with which God loves his people; which arises, not from any goodness shown to him, or received by him.

2. God is to be loved by his saints as their "summum bonum," their chief good; yea, their only good, their all in ALL; and so to be only loved: "there is none good but one, that is, God;" God, Father, Son, and Spirit, the one Lord God, the object of his people's love; concerning whom they say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. 73:25), and he may be loved by them as their portion now and hereafter, and as their shield and exceeding great reward; and yet their love to him not be mercenary.

3. God is to be loved by his people for the blessings of his goodness communicated to them; he is the fountain of goodness to them; he is good, and does good, and therefore to be praised and loved, even for the bounties of his providence; he follows with his goodness, and daily loads with his benefits; but especially for the blessings of his grace, with which he blesses his chosen in Christ Jesus; as electing grace in him; predestination to the adoption of children by him; acceptance with God, in him, the beloved; redemption through his blood; forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; regenerating, quickening, calling, and sanctifying grace, and all things pertaining to life and godliness. Which benefits bestowed, though they are not in quality the chief motives to love God, as before observed; yet they are in order first, and chiefly strike the affections, and stir them up towards the Lord.

4. The various relations God stands in to his people do and should engage their affections to him; for he is not only their faithful Creator and kind Benefactor in nature and providence; but in grace their covenant God and Father; and the direction to love him is usually, "Thou shall love the Lord THY God;" and David heaps up a variety of titles and characters, under which, and on account of which, he professed to love the Lord; "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength!" &c. (Ps. 18:1-3).

5. What greatly influences the love of the Lord's people to him, and lays them under obligation to love him, is his great love to them (1 John 4:19), which love appeared in choosing them in Christ to eternal happiness, of his own free favour and goodwill; in the provision of Christ to be the propitiation for their sins; in the mission of him into the world for that purpose; in the free and full forgiveness of all their sins, for his sake; in drawing them to himself, in effectual calling, with his loving kindness, having, for the great love wherewith he loved them, quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins; and in openly espousing them to himself in conversion, called, the "love" of their "espousals;" with all after manifestations of his love

unto them.

6. The examples of the saints in all ages might be urged as motives to love the Lord; as of Enoch, Noah, and others before the flood; of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph after it; with Joshua, Samuel, David, and others; but especially our Lord Jesus Christ, in human nature, who, in the exercise of this grace, as in others, is an example to us (John 14:31).

Secondly, the subjects of this grace of love, in whom it is, by whom the Lord is loved, and how they come by this grace.

I. It is not of men, nor is it in men naturally; it is not in any natural man, who is in a state of nature and unregeneracy; such are "lovers of pleasures," sinful lusts and pleasures, "more than lovers of God;" yea, some of them are described as "haters of God;" and, indeed, the carnal mind, in every man, is enmity against God, not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself; which denotes how great and intense, and what a rooted and implacable enmity there is in a carnal man to God, and all that is good: nor is there any love in the people of God themselves before conversion; they are "without God," without any knowledge of God, and love to him; they are alienated from God, and from the life of God, and have no desire after him, nor of communion with him; but are "enemies in their minds," in the temper and disposition of them; and which is shown by their "wicked works;" and in this state they were when Christ died and shed his blood for them, to make peace and reconciliation for them, (Col. 1:20, 21; Rom. 5:10), which circumstance greatly illustrates the love of God in the gift of his Son to them (1 John 4:10).

2. The grace of love is of God; he is the efficient cause and author of it, as he is of every grace; the apostle John expressly says, "love is of God," of God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is of God the Father, who is the God of all grace, and so of this (1 John 4:7), and "love with faith," are wished for "from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 6:23), and it stands in the first place among the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), it is wrought in the soul in regeneration, when other graces are, and is an evidence of it; for "every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7), and a man cannot love God until he is regenerated, and renewed in the Spirit of his mind, and is made a partaker of the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which is necessary to it, and which is promised (Deut. 30:6), this grace only appears with other graces, and when they do; there can be no love to God where there is no knowledge of him; according to that known phrase, "ignoti nulla cupido;" where there is knowledge of him, especially of him in Christ as gracious and merciful there will be love to him (1 John 4:7,8), where ignorance is there is no love; but it appears where knowledge is, and it accompanies faith: both spring from the same abundant grace (1 Tim. 1:14), faith, hope, and love go together (1 Cor. 13:13), as the subject of love is a regenerate man, the seat of it is the heart, not the head, nor the tongue, but the heart; it lies not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and true love to God is a love of him with all the heart, soul, and strength.

Thirdly, how, in what way and manner, love to God manifests itself.

1. In a desire to be like him; one that loves another endeavors to imitate him; and such that love the Lord are followers of him, as dear children, beloved ones, and walk in love, and are obedient ones, and desirous of being holy, as he is holy, in all manner of conversation; nor can they be thoroughly satisfied and contented until they awake in his likeness.

2. In making his glory the supreme end of all their actions; as this is God's end in, all he does in providence, who makes all things for himself, his own glory; so in all things in grace, they are all directed to the glory of it; nor will he give, nor suffer to be given, his glory to another; wherefore, in imitation of him, they that love the Lord, do all they do, whether in a natural and civil sense, or of a religious and spiritual kind, whether praying, or reading, or hearing, or preaching, their end is, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11).

3. In desiring of, and delighting in, communion with God; longing to appear before God, and enjoy his presence in his courts; thirst for him as in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, that they may see his power and his glory in his sanctuary; this is the one thing uppermost in their minds, and which they seek most importunately for, that they may behold the beauty of the Lord in his temple; if God lifts but up the light of his countenance on them, this puts joy and

gladness into their hearts, more than the affluence of all earthly things can; and if they are indulged with communion with him, they exalt and glory, saying, "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

4. In a carefulness not to offend him, by sinning against him; "ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10), and they will show their hatred of it, and endeavour to avoid it, and even to abstain from all appearance of it; and when opportunity offers, and they are solicited by temptations to sin, argue, as Joseph; "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9), against God, who has loved me, and I am under such great obligations to love him again?

5. In grief, when he has withdrawn himself, and in a diligent seeking after him until he is found; when he hides his face, and withdraws his gracious presence, a soul that loves God is troubled at it, and complains of it, as the church did; "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me!" and therefore such a soul, with Job, expresses its concern to know where it could find him, and takes for it a course like his, goes forward and backward, to the right and left, where be used to work, and was wont to be seen (Job 23:2, 8, 9).

6. In parting with and bearing all for his sake, leaving their own people and father's house, country, and kindred, as Abraham did, to go where he directs; saying as Ruth said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go, where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thou God shall be my God:" and such that love God are willing to endure all hardships for his sake, to suffer reproach, persecution, and distress of every kind, rather than forego their profession and enjoyment of him.

7. In a regard to his house, worship, and ordinances; they that love the Lord love the habitation of his house, the place where his honour dwells; his tabernacles are amiable and lovely; a day in his house is better than a thousand elsewhere; it is no other, in their esteem, than the gate of heaven, and, like the disciples on the mount, think it good for them to be here, and are for making tabernacles to abide in.

8. By a value for his word, his gospel, and the truths of it. They that love the Lord receive the love of the truth; not only the truth, but a love of it, an affection for it; it is more to be desired by them than gold, and is more to them than thousands of gold and silver; it is more esteemed of by them than their necessary food; they find it, and eat it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; the feet of them that bring the good tidings of it are beautiful unto them.

9. In love and affection to the people of God; who are, with those that love the Lord, the excellent in the earth, in whom is all their delight; as they love him that begets, they love those who are begotten of him, and bear his image; and they are taught of him to do this in their regeneration, and which is an evidence that they have passed from death to life, and are born again.

10. By a disesteem of all things in comparison of God: to love the world, and the things of it, in an immoderate manner, is not consistent with the love of the Father, or with profession of love to him; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God; and a man cannot be a friend of the world and a lover of God; no man can serve two masters God and mammon; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other.

Fourthly, the nature and properties of the love of God; what it is, or should be.

1. It is, or ought to be, universal; a love of all that is in God, and belongs unto him; of all his attributes and perfections, of one as another; not of his goodness, grace, and mercy, and of him for them only; but of his holiness, justice, and truth; and of all his commandments, which are all to be respected, attended unto, and obeyed, (Ps. 119:127, 128), and it is a love of all the truths and doctrines of the gospel, of whatsoever is contained in the Scripture; every word of God is pure to them that love the Lord; and all the words of his mouth are plain and right, and nothing froward or perverse in them. And this love extends to all the people of God, of whatsoever class, rank, degree, or denomination (Eph. 1:15).

2. It is, or ought to be, superlative: what exceeds all other love, or love to all other persons and things; as there is none like the Lord for greatness and goodness, so there is none to be loved like him, none in heaven nor in earth, neither angels nor men; not the greatest personages, and those of the most amiable qualities and characters; nor those in the nearest relation, as father, mother, husband, wife, &c.

3. It is, or ought to be, hearty and sincere; a love without dissimulation; not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth; it is required to be with "all the heart," in the most cordial manner; and "with all the soul," the powers and faculties of it, the affections being wholly engrossed and swallowed up in love to God; and "with all the might," or "strength;" with all the strength of grace, or spiritual strength a man is possessed of.

4. Should be constant; such is the love of God to his people, he rests in his love towards them; such is the love of Christ to them; who, "having loved his own which are in the world, he loves them to the end," immutably and invariably: the love of God's people falls short of this; it is variable and inconstant in its acts and exercises, though its principle remains.

5. It is imperfect in the present state, as every grace is: knowledge is imperfect; "we know but in part;" and faith is imperfect, and hence an increase of it is desired; and so is love, it sometimes waxes cold, through the prevalence of corruption, the force of temptation, and the snares of the world; and lukewarmness and indifference takes place, until there is a reviving of it through a fresh stream of love from God.

6. It may be increased, and sometimes is, the apostle prays for an increase of it, and he thanks God for it that it did abound (1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 1:3), which though it refers to love to the saints, is equally true of love to God, which increases the one as the other.

7. This grace of love, like others, can never be lost; though it may wax cold, it does not sink to nothing, and though it may be less, and abated, and grow weak, as to the ardency and fervency of it, it is not lost; yea, will abide when other graces have dropped their exercise, which is one reason why it is said to be the "greatest" (1 Cor. 13:13) it never fails (1 Cor. 13:8).

Fifthly, The happiness of such that love the Lord.

1. They are loved by him; "I love them that love me;" not that their love is the cause of the love of God to them; his love is prior to theirs, and is the cause of that; but such that love the Lord, greater manifestations of his love are made to them, and more instances of it shown; the secrets of his heart's love are disclosed unto them, that is shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit, and they are directed into it, and led more largely into a view of interest in it; which to enjoy is a great blessing; for "his lovingkindness is better than life" (Ps. 63:3).

1e2. They are known of God; "if any man love God, the same is known of him" (1 Cor. 8:3), is taken notice of by him, owned and acknowledged as his; and to whom he makes himself known, uses him familiarly, and favours him with communion with himself, and knows his soul in adversity, supports him in it, and delivers out of it; the knowledge he has of him is special, peculiar, and distinct, and is joined with love and affection to him; "the Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

3. They are preserved by him; "the Lord preserveth all them that love him" (Ps. 145:20), and the same is made use of as an argument to love him (Ps. 31:23), since the Lord takes them under his special care, and preserves them from every enemy, from hurts and dangers, from sin, Satan, and the world, and from a final and total falling away from him, by means of any of them; he preserves them in Christ, and preserves them safe to the coming of Christ, and to his kingdom and glory.

4. They have many instances of mercy, kindness, and respect shown them; for "the Lord is a God showing mercy unto thousands of them that love him" (Ex 20:6), hence David thus prays for himself; "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name" (Ps. 119:132).

5. All things that occur unto them in the present life are for their good, and work together for it (Rom. 8:28), even all afflictions and adverse dispensations of providence, as well as more prosperous ones; either for their temporal good, as in the case of Jacob, who thought all things were going against him, when they were all working for him; or for spiritual good; for the trial and increase of grace, of faith, patience, &c. (Rom. 5:5; 1 Pet. 1:7; Jam. 1:2), and always for their eternal good (2 Cor. 4:17).

6. Great things are laid up and reserved for them that love the Lord, to be enjoyed hereafter, even things inconceivable, and which are expressed by the highest enjoyments in this life, and which vastly exceed them; by a "crown" and "kingdom" they are now made "heirs" of (1 Cor. 2:9; Jam. 1:12; 2:5).

II. Love to Christ is another eminent branch of the

grace of love; for he is not only a distinct divine Person in the Godhead, but stands in an office capacity, as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour of his people; and has given various surprising proofs and instances of his love to them; and therefore it is not to be wondered at that he should be represented in the Scriptures in so distinguished a manner as the object of their love; and he being so well known to be the object of the love of saints, and so deserving of it, the church only describes him by this periphrasis, "him whom my soul loveth;" without naming his name; supposing that everyone she conversed with knew who she meant (Cant. 3:1-3), and very frequently she calls him, "My beloved," without any other description of him (Cant. 1:13, 14; 2:16). Cant. the apostle Peter, after having made mention of the appearing, of Jesus Christ, adds, "Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Pet. 1:8), and for himself, he could appeal to Christ, as the omniscient God, and say, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). Concerning which love to Christ the following things may be considered,

First, on what accounts Christ is to be loved, and loved, by them that know him and believe in him: and there are many things in him and belonging to him which engage their love and affections to him. And he is to be loved,

1. Because of the excellencies of his Person: as the Son of God, his glory is the glory of the only begotten of the Father; he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person; is equal to God, and in the glorious and lovely form of God; the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells in him; every perfection in Deity is to be found in him; and therefore has everything to attract the love of his people to him; hence one of the ancients said, "Est aliquid in Christo formosius salvatore;" there is something in Christ more amiable, more lovely, and more beautiful than the Saviour.

2. Because he is the beloved of his Father, his dear Son, the Son of his love, the darling and delight of his soul, always by him, near to him, as one brought up with him, carried in his bosom, in which he lay, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; all which is expressive of his tender affection for him, and the inexpressible pleasure he took in him before the world began; and which he further declared by putting all things into his hands, and showing him all he did; which instances our Lord makes mention of himself, as proofs of his Father's love to him (John 3:35; 5:20), and when he was here on earth, in human nature, both at his baptism and at his transfiguration on the mount, he declared, by a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5), yea, he loved him because he laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:17), all which most strongly move and excite the saints to love him.

3. Because of the fulness of grace in him for the supply of their wants; it is a very considerable branch of the glory of Christ, as Mediator, and which recommends him as such, that he is "full of grace and truth;" as the fulness of Deity in him renders him an object worthy of the highest love, as a divine Person; so the fulness of grace it pleased the Father should dwell in him, as Man and Mediator, cannot fail of recommending him as suitable to indigent sinners, and of raising in them an high esteem of him, as a most lovely Person, and of attracting their affections to him, (Ps. 45:2; Cant. 5:10).

4. Because of his precious names and titles; his "name" in general, "is as ointment poured forth," which diffuses a most sweet savour, alluding to his name, Messiah, which signifies "anointed;" and from whom the saints receive the "anointing," the graces of the Spirit, which are his "ointments," good and savoury, "and therefore do the virgins love him" (Cant. 1:3), who receive all their grace and beauty from him, which makes them amiable and lovely to him. His name Jesus, a Saviour, so called because he saves his people from their sins, is a delightful sound in their ears; as is also, "the Lord our Righteousness," by whose righteousness they are justified before God, and become perfectly comely in his sight (Matthew 1:21; Jer. 23:6), and every other name and title of his in (Isa. 9:6).

5. Because of the offices he bears, so useful and beneficial to his people; he is the "Mediator" between God and men, the day's man between them both, who has brought them together, and reconciled them; the "Surety" of the better Testament, who engaged to be a ransom for them, to pay their debts, to bear their sins, and make satisfaction for them, and to bring them to God, and set them before him; their "Prophet," to teach and instruct them, and enlighten in the knowledge of

saving truths; their "Priest," to make atonement for their sins, and to intercede for their persons; and their "King" to rule over them, protect and defend them; and who would not fear and love one so great and respectable!

6. Because of the relations he stands in to them: he is their everlasting Father, who has the most affectionate concern for their welfare; he is the most tender "Husband," who nourishes the church as his own flesh, and for whom he gave himself a sacrifice; he is the most kind and loving Brother, was born for the adversity of his brethren, and to bring them out of it, and is not ashamed of his relation to them; he is a most faithful "Friend," a friend that loves at all times, that sticks closer than a brother; no wonder that the church, after she had described him at large, should break forth in such an exulting and affectionate strain; "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!" (Cant. 5:16).

7. Because he has all blessings in his hands for them; peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life; and God has blessed his people in him with all spiritual blessings; has given them grace in him, even all the blessings of grace, before the world began; and has made him to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; so that he is their ALL in ALL, and therefore it is not to be wondered at, that he should be the object of their highest love.

8. Particularly, because he is their Saviour and Redeemer, who assumed their nature, in order to die in their room and stead, and became the author of eternal salvation to them, and who saved them, and gave himself for them, to redeem them from all iniquity, and out of the hand of every enemy, and has by his blood obtained eternal redemption for them, and who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood, and has procured the remission of them, as well as cleansing from them; and on all accounts they have reason to love him, and sing his new song of redeeming grace, "Worthy is the Lamb!" &c. (Rev. 1:5; 5:9).

9. Nor does his love cease here, nor the obligations on his people to love him; for he appears in the presence of God for them, and ever lives to make intercession for them, and is their advocate with the Father, in consequence of which various blessings of grace descend upon them.

10. He will appear a second time, without sin, to the salvation of them that look for him; and his appearance is to be looked for, it being a glorious one; and is itself to be loved; and much more the Person, who shall appear in so much glory, and so much to the advantage of those that love him; for a crown of righteousness is laid up, and will be given to them "that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

Secondly, the spring's and causes of love to Christ.

1. It does not arise from nature; men in a state of nature are without Christ, without any knowledge of him, and affection for him; they see no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty in him, wherefore he should be desired by them: and this is not only the case of openly profane and carnal sinners, but even of some who have some notion of religion and sacred things; and yet ask, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" what peculiar charms, excellencies, and beauty are there in him, which give him a preference to all others? But this betrays their ignorance of Christ, and want of true affection for him (Cant. 5:9).

2. But it is owing to the abundant grace of God in regeneration; an unregenerate man is destitute of it; "If God was your Father," says Christ to the Jews, their Father by adoption, of which regeneration is the evidence, "ye would love me; for everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him" (John 8:42; 1 John 5:1). Whoever loves God, who has, of his own good will and abundant mercy, begotten him again to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, loves Christ also, who is begotten of him, though in an higher sense, and who is the firstborn among many brethren. Faith in Christ, and love to him, commence together; and both flow from the same grace and favour (1 Tim. 1:14), none but true believers in Christ sincerely love him; "faith works by love; to them that believe he is precious" (Gal. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:7), and none but such who by an eye of faith have seen his glory, fulness, and suitableness, truly love him; for,

3. Love to him is owing to a special revelation of him, in the effectual calling; when God calls a man by his grace, he reveals his Son in him, and to him, in the glories of his person, and the riches of his grace; when he sees the King in his beauty, and is enamoured with him, he appears to him white and ruddy, a perfection of beauty, the chiefest among a

thousand thousand, none like him among all the men on earth, nor among all the angels in heaven; he is in his esteem, "altogether lovely," beyond all compare, beyond all expression; all things are reckoned loss in comparison of the knowledge of him.

4. Love to Christ arises, not only from a view of his loveliness; but also from a sense of his love, which passes knowledge, from a feeling sensation of it, shed abroad in the heart, which causes love again. This was the case of the sinful woman mentioned in the gospel, who loved much because much love was shown her, in the forgiveness of her sins, through the blood of Jesus; and this is the experience of all the saints; "we love him because he first loved us," in taking the care and charge of us, in assuming our nature, and in dying in our room and stead.

5. This love is more and more heightened and increased through knowledge of union to him, and through communion with him; the church, sitting under the shadow of Christ with great delight, and his fruit sweet to her taste, and being brought by him into his banqueting house, with his banner of love displayed over her, served much to draw forth her love to him, and make her even sick with it; and especially being brought "into his chamber" by him, filled her with joy and gladness, and caused her to remember his love more than wine; and she observed this as the effect of it, "the upright love thee" (Cant. 1:4; 2:3-5). Thus John, the beloved disciple, being indulged with leaning on the bosom of Jesus, not only had a greater manifestation of Christ's love, but more strongly expressed his love to Christ.

Thirdly, how, in what way and manner, or in what instances, love to Christ shows itself.

1. In a regard to all that are his, and belong to him; "His mouth is most sweet" to such, and he is "altogether," or "all of him, lovely," in his person, in his offices, and in his people; his promises are like apples of gold in pictures of silver; the words of his mouth, the doctrines of his grace, are sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb; the ministers of the gospel, who bring the glad tidings of salvation, are beautiful and lovely; his saints are the precious sons of Zion, and comparable to fine gold; his ways are ways of pleasantness, his tabernacles amiable, and his ordinances delightful.

2. In keeping his commandments; "If ye love me," says Christ, "keep my commandments;" this is the strongest and clearest proof of love; he that, from a principle of love, "keepeth them, he it is," says Christ, "that loveth me;" others may talk of their love to Christ; but he is the man that truly loves him (John 14:15, 21).

3. In a carefulness not to offend him, and cause him to depart from them; thus solicitous was the church, and therefore fearful lest any offence should be given, and occasion his removal from her (Cant. 2:7).

4. In a jealousy of his love, lest he should not love them at all; or should not love them so much as another, or another more than they; "Jealousy is cruel as the grave," fearful, [26] distressing, and insatiable (Cant. 8:6).

5. In a desire of, and delight in, his company; this delight is very great; "I sat down under his shadow," under the shadow of his ordinances, enjoying his presence in them, "with great delight" (Cant. 2:3), and this desire is very vehement, strongly expressed with great ardor and fervency, and the presence of Christ is importunately sought after (Isa. 26:9).

6. In grief and concern, when he has withdrawn his presence. "In his favor," in his gracious presence, and under the smiles of his countenance, "is life," a soul is alive and comfortable; but if he withdraws himself, and the manifestations of his favour, it is death, it kills, it is intolerable; "My soul failed," swooned away, "when he spake," or at the parting word (Cant. 5:8). Mary, at our Lord's sepulchre, not finding him there, with an heart full of grief, and ready to break, burst out in a passionate manner, with tears, "They have taken away my Lord!" (John 20:13).

7. In a strict search and inquiry after him until found; so the church, when she had lost her beloved, sought him first on her bed, in her chamber, and private retirement; then in the city, the assembly of the saints, in the "streets" and "broad" places, in the public ministry of the word and ordinances; and then of the "watchmen," the ministers of the gospel personally; and throughout the whole of the search the inquiry was, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and in an after similar case; when, through her sleepiness, slothfulness, and ingratitude, he withdrew from her; which, when she perceived, she sought him, but could not find him; she called to him, but received no answer; she met with ill usage from the watchmen,

but this did not deter her from going in quest of him; she lighted upon the daughters of Jerusalem, in her search of him, whom she charged, that if they found her beloved, that they would tell him, that she was sick of love for him (Cant. 3:1-3; 5:6-8).

8. In expressions of joy upon finding him; as the church in the above case; "It was but little," says she, "that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go:" and in the other case how does she exult in the close of her account, upon finding him; "This is my beloved, and this is my friend!" (Cant. 3:4; 5:16). Cant., after our Lord's absence by death, from his disciples, when he rose again, and showed himself to them, it is said, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20), and so it is when Christ has withdrawn himself from his people, and they see him again by faith, they are filled "with a joy unspeakable and full of glory!" and there is great reason for such joy on finding him; for he that finds him, "finds life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord" (Prov. 8:35).

9. In pushing through all difficulties to enjoy him, as the church did; who, in search of Christ, exposed herself to the insults, blows, wounds, and depredations of the watchmen: so souls at first conversion, when their first love, the Dove of their espousals to Christ, is warm and ardent, like Israel of old, go after him "in a wilderness, in a land not sown," in very discouraging circumstances, through much reproach, tribulation, and affliction, from the world, and others.

10. In parting with and bearing all for Christ's sake; in leaving relations, friends, and former companions, houses, lands, and everything dear and valuable, standing in competition with him: in denying themselves in every view, sinful self, righteous self, and civil self; taking up the cross cheerfully, and following him; and even loving not their lives unto death for his sake; Christ is the pearl of great price in their esteem, and they are willing to part with all things, and suffer the loss of all, that they may enjoy him.

Fourthly, the nature of this love.

1. Universal; all of Christ, as before observed; for he is all lovely; his person, his people, his word and ordinances, his precepts, and his promises.

2. Superlative; "He that loves father or mother more than me," says Christ, "is not worthy of me," &c. (Matthew 10:37), and the same holds good of any other person or thing; there is none in heaven nor in earth to be loved like him; he is the chiefest among ten thousand.

3. Hearty and sincere; such who truly love Christ, love him "in sincerity," or "in incorruption" (Eph. 6:24), with a love that cannot be corrupted, with a love unfeigned, and without dissimulation; such was Peter's love to Christ, who could appeal to him as omniscient for the truth of it.

4. Warm and fervent; such as "many waters" of sin, "temptation, and affliction, cannot quench;" floods of the same, more forcible, "cannot drown;" and from which, "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword, cannot separate" (Cant. 8:7; Rom. 8:35).

5. It should be constant, as Christ's is to us, who loves at all times, and to the end: but, alas! other objects present, and other lovers are followed after for a time; yet true love is not totally and finally lost; first love, though left for a while, is revived and restored; and the first husband is returned unto and abode by.

6. It is very grateful and well pleasing to Christ; "How fair is thy love," says he, "my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine!" (Cant. 4:10), he remembers the first love of his people, the love of their espousals, the kindness of their youth, when forgotten by them: what made him put the question so often to Peter, Lovest thou me? One reason, among others, might be, because it was pleasing to him to hear him say, and so strongly aver it, that he loved him.

Fifthly, the happiness of those that love Christ.

1. They are loved by him: "I love them, that love me," says Wisdom, or Christ (Prov. 8:17), that is, he continues to love them, and makes greater manifestations of himself, and of his love to them; and so he himself explains it, when speaking of those that show their love to him, by keeping his commandments; he says, "I will love him, and manifest myself unto him;" and this he shows by his frequent love visits to them, and by his prayers and preparations for them, that they may be with him where he is, and behold his glory.

2. They are blessed who love Christ; as a curse, an "anathema, maranatha," is wished to those who love him not; so "grace," the best of blessings, is desired

for those who love him in sincerity (1 Cor. 16:22; Eph. 6:24).

3. It is expressed prayer-wise, that it might be, and it is a prayer of faith, that it shall be; "Let them that love him, be as the sun when it goeth forth in his might" (Judges 5:31) for light, splendor, and glory; as they are when clothed with the sun, and when the Sun of righteousness arises upon them with healing in his wings, and as they will be when they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

4. Those that love Christ, he, as he has promised, "Will cause to inherit substance" (Prov. 8:21), even a better and a more enduring substance than is to be enjoyed in this world, riches of grace, and riches of glory, durable riches and righteousness.

III. Another branch of the grace of love is, love to men.

First, the objects of it; men.

1. Angels are indeed objects of love; not the evil angels, because of their wickedness and apostasy from God, and because of their mischievous nature, continually seeking to do hurt to the persons of men, their souls and bodies, their properties and estates, as much as in them lies, and as far as they have leave; but good angels, who are very amiable, because of the excellencies of their nature, their holiness, wisdom, and strength, in which they excel; they belong to the family in heaven, and are of great use to saints on earth; are ministering; spirits to the heirs of salvation; though they are not to be worshipped by good men, being their fellow servants; yet they are to be loved, being friendly to them, and wish their welfare, and rejoice at it: they expressed their joy at the good will of God to men, shown in the incarnation of Christ for them; and there is joy among them whenever a sinner is converted and repents; besides, the saints will be like them in the resurrection, and will join them in the worship of God, and in communion with him for ever. But,

2. It is with men, the branch of love under consideration is concerned; and, indeed, all men are to be loved; for this is the second great commandment, "Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself;" and all mankind are neighbours; they are all the offspring of God, and near akin to one another, being all of one man's blood; nay, not only those that are kind and neighbourly, are to be loved, but even our very enemies; so Christ has taught us by his precept; "I say unto you, love your enemies;" and by his example, in praying to his Father, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do!" (Matthew 22:39, 40; 5:44; Luke 23:34), nay, we are directed to show kindness to them, and heap favours upon them, and thereby overcome their evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).

3. The peculiar objects of this branch of love now to be treated of are good men, the saints and people of God; who are,

(1). Called brethren; not in a natural but spiritual relation, the brethren of Christ, and brethren one of another; who are brethren and partakers of the same heavenly calling, or are in the same church state, and are called the "brotherhood," and therefore should love as brethren (1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8). Hence this love has the name of Philadelphia, or brotherly love (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1).

(2). Disciples and followers of Christ; such who have learned Christ, and have learned to deny themselves, and to take up the cross and follow him; these, as they should love Christ, so likewise one another (John 13:35), and the least instance of love and kindness shown to such on account of what they are, is exceeding pleasing to Christ (Matthew 10:42).

(3). Believers in Christ, who are called the household of faith, partakers of the grace of faith, and embrace and profess the same doctrine of faith, these are to be loved, and special kindness shown unto them (Gal. 6:10; Titus 3:15), the little ones who believe in Christ he is so tender of, and has such a special regard unto, that he would have no offence given unto them; but signifies, it would fare ill with those who should give it (Matthew 18:6).

(4). Children of God, who are such by adoption, to which they are predestinated, and which they receive through and from Christ, and of which regeneration is the evidence, and the Spirit of God the witness; and who become apparently so by faith in Christ Jesus, and being children of the same Father, ought to love one another (1 John 5:1, 2).

(5). They are described as saints, who are the objects of this grace of love; who are called to be saints, and are called with an holy calling, or sanctified by the Spirit of God, and have principles of grace and holiness wrought in them, and live holy lives and conversations; and frequently does the apostle speak

in commendation of the churches for their "love unto all the saints" (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4).

Secondly, the nature of this grace of love, as exercised towards the saints.

1. It is wrought in regeneration. Men in a state unregeneracy are destitute of it; "the world hates" those that are "chosen out of" it, and called; and that because they are so; yea, one part of the character of God's elect before conversion is, "hateful, and hating one another;" in regeneration, and not before, men are "taught of God to love one another;" and this is an evidence of their regeneration, (1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 3:14).

2. This grace is very largely described (1 Cor. 13:1-13), for though our translators have rendered the word "charity" throughout, for what reason it does not appear, it should be "love;" for it is manifestly distinguished from alms deeds, or relieving the poor and distressed, which the apostle supposes may be, and yet this grace be wanting; by which he seems to understand love to the saints; without which, he suggests the greatest gifts of knowledge are nothing, and all pretensions to, and professions of, religion are in vain: those who are possessed of it, "suffer long," bear and forbear much, are "kind" to their fellow creatures and fellow Christians; "envy not" the superior gifts and graces of others; "vaunt not" over those supposed inferior to them; and are not "puffed up" with their own attainments; "do not behave unseemly," in a haughty, supercilious, and contemptuous manner to those in connection with them; "seek" not their "own" things, pleasures, profits, honours, and to exalt themselves above others; are not "easily provoked" to wrath against those that offend them; "think no evil" of others, give not way to groundless jealousies and surmises; "rejoice not in iniquity," in committing it themselves, nor in seeing it done by others; not in lies, nor in any false representations of things; but "rejoice in the truth," in hearing and telling truth of others; "bear all things," all reproaches, insults, and indignities, with patience and meekness; "believe all things" of good report in fellow Christians, not giving credit to evil spoken of them, without sufficient reason; "hope all things," the best concerning them, and that what is of ill report is not true of them; "endure all things," the ill treatment and ill manners of others, with much mildness and gentleness.

3. It should be universal; "Love to all saints;" for which some churches are commended, before observed; whether they be weak or strong believers, more or less knowing Christians, they are to be cordially "received" into the love and affections of the saints; and be they of whatsoever name and denomination in religion, they may, provided they appear to be Christ's, and bear his image; and let their worldly circumstances be what they will, no respect, as to affection, is to be had to persons; one in a Christian assembly with a gold ring, and in goodly apparel, is not to be preferred to a poor brother in mean raiment, as James directs (Jam. 2:1-3).

4. It should be fervent (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8), and every method should be taken and means used to blow up the flame of love, and to keep it alive; it is a sign of bad times, and of things going ill in religion, when "the love of many waxes cold" (Matthew 24:12).

5. It should be, and where it is right it will be, unfeigned and sincere; so the apostle calls that love which springs from an heart purified under the influence of divine truths, by the Spirit, "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet. 1:22), it is love without dissimulation, real and cordial; not "in word" and "in tongue" only, but "in deed" and "in truth" (1 John 3:18).

6. It is an active and laborious grace, by which the saints "serve one another," both in things temporal and spiritual (Gal. 5:13), hence we read of the "work and labour of love" (1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10), it not only works and is busy, and continually exercises itself in doing good, but it labours at it, and yet is not weary of well doing.

7. The manner in which, or the exemplar according to which, it is to be exercised is, as Christ has loved his people; this is what he himself has enjoined, that is the argument and motive inducing to an observance of it (John 13:34; 15:12), yea, the apostle John, carries this pattern of love to such a degree, that as Christ has shown his love to his people in laying down his life for them; they are to show theirs in laying down their lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

8. It is a very excellent grace; after the apostle had exhorted, to "covet earnestly the best gifts," he adds, "yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31), something more excellent than the best

external gifts, both ordinary and extraordinary, he had before been speaking of; and by the connection of the words with the following chapter, it appears to be the grace of love, which,

(1). Is the greatest of all the graces (1 Cor. 13:13), because it is more diffusive of goodness and kindness, and so more beneficial to others, though the other graces may be more useful to a man's self; and because of its long duration, even as to the exercise of it, which will be throughout an endless eternity; for "charity," or "love, never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:8).

(2). It is an evidence of a man's being born again; "Every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7; 3:14), and this is the grand criterion of a true disciple of Christ (John 13:35). In Tertullian's time the heathens knew the Christians by their loving attitude toward one another in public, and would point unto them and say, "See how they love one another!" [27] such times are now to be wished for.

(3). It is called the "bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14), which perfectly knits and unites the saints together, and keeps the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; it is the perfect bond of the church and its members; of the saints to one another, and of their several graces.

(4). Without this, a profession of religion is an empty and useless thing; and the strongest expressions of regard unto it, speculative notions about it, and boastings of it, are insignificant (1 Cor. 13:1-3). How super excellent therefore must this grace be! It is in vain to talk of love to God and love to Christ, where this is wanting (1 John 4:20).

(5). It is the exercise of this grace which makes the communion of the saints with one another delightful; "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!" the Psalmist compares it, for its cheering and refreshing nature, to the precious ointment poured on Aaron's head, and to the dew of Hermon, and that which fell on the mountains of Zion (Ps. 133:1-3), and it also tends greatly to their edification in church fellowship; "Charity," or "love, edifieth;" the body, the church, being united to Christ the head, and the members of it fitly joined together, "maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love" (1 Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16).

(6). It is one part of the saints spiritual armour; "The breastplate of faith and love" is a good defence against the enemy, who cannot easily get an advantage where this piece of armour is carefully and constantly made use of; it makes the church of Christ as terrible as an army with banners; the love and union of saints to one another, is their great security against the common adversary; like the bundle of sticks in the fable, which, while bound together, could not be broken, but when separated were easily snapped asunder.

Thirdly, how, in what manner, and wherein this grace of love to one another manifests itself.

1. By praying with and for one another; hence when our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he directed them to pray to God as their common Father; saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" thereby teaching them, that they were to pray for one another even for all saints, and that constantly and fervently (Eph. 6:18), which availeth much, and tends to godly edification.

2. By bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), and this is done by assisting and relieving each other in distress, as much as in us lies, by sympathizing with each other in trouble, as the members of a natural body do, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

3. By forbearing and forgiving one another; as God, for Christ's sake, and as Christ also has forgiven them (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:31, 32; Luke 17:3,4).

4. By rebuking and admonishing one another in love. Sin known, should not be suffered to lie upon a brother, without reproving for it; this is not kindness to him; "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Prov. 27:5, 6), but then such rebuke should be given in love, and with much tenderness; which is most likely to be kindly received and to succeed; "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness," &c. (Ps. 141:5), when such who are overtaken in a fault are restored in the spirit of meekness, this shows tenderness and brotherly love.

5. By endeavoring to establish one another in the doctrines of the gospel, and of increasing light and knowledge; which is called, "building up themselves in their most holy faith;" which is done by praying and conversing together, often speaking one to another about divine things; not disdaining to receive instruction even from inferiors; thus Aquila and Priscilla expounded in a private manner the way of God more perfectly to Apollos, a public teacher;

which he attended to.

6. By exhorting and stirring up one another to the several duties of religion, both public and private (Heb. 10:24, 25).

Fourthly, there are various arguments and motives which may be made use of to excite to the exercise of this grace of love.

1. It is Christ's new commandment; so he says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;" which yet, as the apostle John says, it was both old and new (John 13:34; 1 John 2:7, 8), an old commandment, being founded upon the original law of God; a new commandment, being not only an excellent one, especially as now delivered out, since excellent things in scripture are often called new ones, as a new song, &c. but because of the new edition of it under the gospel dispensation, and being given forth anew by Christ the lawgiver, in his house, called therefore, "The law of Christ," which is the law of love; and having a new pattern and exemplar of it, and a new move and argument added to it, mentioned by Christ himself; "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34; 15:12).

2. The love of God and Christ should engage unto it; the love of God in the mission and gift of his Son to die for us, and become the propitiation for our sins; "Beloved," says the apostle, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11), and the love of Christ in giving himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, to atone for our sins; "Walk in love, as Christ hath loved us," &c. (Eph. 5:2).

3. The relation the saints stand in one to another, is a reason why they should love one another; they are members of the same body, and should have an affection and sympathy for one another; as the members in a natural, so they in a spiritual way; they are children of the same Father, and belong to the same family, and are all brethren; this is the argument Moses used with the Israelites at variance (Acts 7:26).

4. The comfort and joy of ministers should be an argument with saints to mutual love; it is with the greater pleasure they pursue their studies and labour in their ministrations, for the good of souls, when peace and love are cultivated among them; but when it is otherwise, it is greatly discouraging and distressing to them, and they go on heavily in their work; for where envying and strife are, there is confusion, and every evil work; which is very disagreeable, and makes uncomfortable; yea, the comfort of the saints themselves, and their edification are hereby greatly hurt; wherefore both with respect to ministers and people, the apostle exhorts to love and unity (Philemon 2:1,2; 2 Cor. 13:11), and that "brotherly love continue;" for the love of God and Christ continues; nothing can separate from it; they love to the end: the relation of saints continues; being once the children of God, and brethren of Christ, and of one another, they always remain such, and in the family, in the house of God, where they abide, and from whence they are never removed; and if brotherly love continues not, churches cannot continue long; a house divided against itself cannot stand; the church at Ephesus was threatened with a removal of the candlestick, or church state, unless they repented, because they had left their first love.

---

[26] "Res est soliciti plena timoris amor." Ovid.
[27] Apolog. c. 39.

Chapter 10

OF SPIRITUAL JOY

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which follows love; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy" (Gal. 5:22), it attends faith and hope; and as these graces are in exercise, and increase, so does spiritual joy; hence we read of "the joy of faith," and "the rejoicing of hope" (Phil. 1:25; Heb. 3:6), it enters very much into the Christian's character and experience, and is peculiar to saints and believers in Christ. Concerning which may be observed,

1. The objects of it.

First, not a creature, nor creature enjoyment, nor outward privilege, nor duty; but Jehovah himself, the Lord and God of all; therefore called by David, "God, his exceeding joy;" that is, the object of his great joy and gladness (Ps. 43:4). To glory in riches, wisdom, and strength, and to boast of them, is not right; and to rejoice in such boastings, "All such rejoicing is evil" (Jam. 4:16), to rejoice in anything of this kind, is to "rejoice in a thing of nought," in a nonentity, and in what is of no account (Amos 6:13), and so to rejoice in youthful pleasures and vanities, and indulge to

them in the highest degree; such joy is not spiritual, or the fruit of the Spirit; but is carnal and sensual, and but for a season; and to glory, and boast of, and trust in fleshly descent, in birth privileges, and in the duties of religion, and in a man's own righteousness, and please himself with such things, is only the joy of an unregenerate man, and of an hypocrite, which is but for a moment, but the Lord himself is the proper object of joy; to rejoice in him is what is exhorted to, both in the Old and New Testaments (Ps. 33:1; Philemon 4:4). So the prophet Habakkuk did, and resolved to do, in the worst of times, when all creature mercies failed; "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation!" (Hab. 3:17,18), not in him merely as the Creator, from whom are had being, life, and breath, and all things, which yet is matter of joy (Ps. 149:2; Job 35:10), nor in him merely as the God of providence, and a kind benefactor, the preserver of men, and gives them all things richly to enjoy, so that they have reason to rejoice "in every good thing," which the Lord in his providence gives unto them; but more especially saints rejoice in him as their covenant God; "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," says the church; "My soul shall be joyful in my God!" (Isa. 61:10), as her covenant God, which is the sum and substance of the covenant, and includes and secures every blessing of it, and always continues; who, as such, is the God of all grace, and blesses with all spiritual blessings, and gives both grace and glory, supplies all the wants of his people out of his riches in glory, by Christ; and causes all grace to abound towards them, and will never suffer them to want any good thing; he is their portion now, and will be for ever; and as such they rejoice in him; and particularly,

1. In the attributes of God; which are all on the side of his people, and are exercised for their good, and they receive benefit and advantage from; and not only his power, wisdom, truth, and faithfulness, his goodness, grace, and mercy, are matter of joy; but even his justice and holiness, in which he is so glorious; "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (Ps. 97:12).

2. The everlasting love of God is matter of joy to the saints; as the Lord rests in his love, and rejoices over them with joy, so they rejoice in his love to them; it is that river the streams whereof, the blessings which flow from it, make glad their hearts; (see Jer. 31:3), a view of interest in it puts more joy and gladness into the hearts of the Lord's people than the largest increase of worldly things; it makes what they do enjoy blessings indeed; for there is no curse in their blessings; a little, with the favour of God, is better than the riches of many wicked; mean fare, a dinner of herbs, where the love of God is enjoyed, is preferable to the most delicious dainties without it; and greater reason there is for a man to boast of, and rejoice in this, that he knows the Lord, as exercising lovingkindness in the earth, and delighting therein, than to rejoice and glory in the greatest outward attainments of body, mind, and estate; a sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, supports under all the trials and exercises of this life; and even causes to glory in tribulations, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; since neither tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, nor sword, can separate from it; yea, the loving kindness of God is better than life itself, than which nothing is dearer to a man; yea, when men are influenced by this love, they love not their lives unto the death; it is death to them when they are without a sense of this love; but, "in the favour of God," and the enjoyment of it, is "life," it revives and comforts (Ps. 30:5), and what makes the love of God greater cause of joy is, that it is everlasting and unchangeable; though God may be displeased with his people, and chastise them because of their sins; yet he never takes away his lovingkindness from them; and though he hides his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness he has mercy on them; nor shall it ever depart from them; it is more immovable than hills and mountains, and is established both by the promise and oath of God; and there is nothing in heaven, earth, and hell that shall ever separate from it; every thought concerning it, meditation upon it, and discovery of it, fills with joy unspeakable; a thought of it is with the greatest pleasure and delight; meditation on it is sweet; and while musing upon it, the fire of divine love is inflamed, and burns within, and breaks forth in expressions of joy and gladness; and nothing can yield greater satisfaction than to be remembered with the favour God bears to his own people; and the love of God is to be remembered more, and is more exhilarating to the soul, than wine is to the animal spirits (Song of Sol. 1:2, 4; Zech. 10:7).

3. The saints' election of God is matter of joy unto them; that "their names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20), in the Lamb's book of life, in the book of divine predestination to the adoption of children, and to eternal life; and therefore it cannot be such a gloomy and melancholy thing, as some who are strangers to it, and ignorant of it, represent it; but is, as the XVII'th article of the church of England expresses it, "Full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." So Calvin [28] observes, that "those who search into it rightly and in due order, as it is contained in the word, fetch choice consolation from it." And even Arminius himself says, [29] "It serves to comfort afflicted consciences."

It is the foundation blessing of grace, and the standard according to which all others are dispensed; God blesses his people with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world; this stands at the head of them, it is the first link in the chain of salvation, to which the rest are fastened, and by it secured; "Whom he did predestinate them he also glorified;" it always "obtains;" or those who are chosen certainly enjoy every blessing of grace, life, righteousness, and salvation (Eph. 1:3,4; Rom. 8:30; 11:7), from hence springs all the grace of the Spirit dispensed by him in regeneration and sanctification; sanctification of the Spirit is fixed and established in the decree of election, as a mean, and is as certain as the end, salvation; holiness of heart and life is what men are chosen to, and what certainly follows upon their election of God; and so belief of the truth, or faith in Christ; and as many as are ordained unto eternal life, believe; hence true faith is called, "the faith of God's elect:" eternal glory and happiness is secured by it; they that are chosen, are chosen to the obtaining of the glory of Christ; and which, in consequence, they most assuredly enjoy; they cannot finally and totally be deceived and come short, of that glory; no charge can be brought against them; and should any, it would not issue in their condemnation; they that are written in the Lamb's book of life enter into the new Jerusalem; and those who are predestinated are glorified. This is the foundation which stands sure; the seal of which is, "The Lord knows them that are his;" men are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, and that foreknowledge never fails; and therefore the purpose of God, according to election, stands sure; not upon the will and works of men, but upon the sovereign will, certain knowledge, and everlasting love of God; all which lay a solid foundation for joy and gladness.

4. The covenant of grace God has made with his chosen in Christ, is another thing which yields abundance of joy to the believer, both in life and in death; in a view of which, with what joy and exultation does the sweet singer of Israel express himself among the last words he uttered (2 Sam. 23:5), what makes this covenant so desirable, pleasant, and joyful is, that it is "everlasting;" from everlasting to everlasting; from everlasting, for so early was Christ set up as the Mediator of it; blessings of grace were given, and grants of grace made, to the elect in Christ, before the foundation of the world; and eternal life was promised before the world began; nor will it ever be broken, made null and void; nor be antiquated, and succeeded by another covenant; but will always remain in full force; and so administer constant and perpetual joy to the covenant ones. It is also "ordered in all things," to secure the glory of the divine persons; and for the display of the divine perfections; and for the good and happiness of those who are interested in it; it is full of blessings of grace, mercy, and goodness, called, "The sure mercies of David," which are sure to all the seed; and of exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ, and suitable to the cases and circumstances of the Lord's people; which fitly spoken and applied, are as pleasant and delightful as apples of gold in pictures of silver, and give inexpressible joy and delight; "I rejoice at thy word," says David, a word of promise, "as one that findeth great spoil" (Ps. 119:162), which suggests a great degree of joy. To which may be added, that this covenant is free, absolute, and unconditional: its promises do not depend on conditions to be performed by men; but run thus, I "will," and they "shall;" "I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," &c. This covenant is also said to be "sure," its matter, its blessings, and its promises; it is "confirmed of God in Christ;" it is established by the oath of God, and ratified by the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant; it is as immovable as hills and mountains, and more so; they may be removed, but the covenant of peace shall never be removed; it is

what God has commanded for ever; so that there is no fear of its ever failing; and affords an deficient source of joy: "all," or the whole of "salvation" is contained in it, and secured by it, salvation spiritual and eternal; in it Christ is appointed and settled as the author of it; the blessings of salvation are provided, and the persons for whom they are designed, given to Christ in it, the Israel that shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation. So that David had great reason to say, "This is all my desire;" as containing in it all that was desirable by him, delightful to him, and that could afford him joy and pleasure.

Secondly, Christ, and things relating to him, are the objects of the spiritual joy of saints; this enters into the very character of true Christians and believers in Christ, who are described as such who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, even with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (Philemon 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:8). The things relating to him, which are matter and ground of joy, are such as relate both to his person and to his work.

First, that relate to his person, as the Word and Son of God, equally a divine person with his Father, the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). As,

1. The greatness of his person; the great God, God over all blessed for ever, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, having all the perfections of deity, the consideration of which yields joy to believers in him; hence they know and may conclude that all he did and suffered in human nature united to his person, answered the ends for which they were done and suffered; his righteousness is the righteousness of God, and so unto and upon all them that believe; his blood the blood of the Son of God, and as such has a virtue to cleanse from all sin; his sacrifice the sacrifice of himself, and so of a sweet smelling savour to God, and of efficacy to atone for sin; and his salvation a great salvation, plenteous and complete, he being the great God and our Saviour; hence also they are satisfied that they must be safe in his hands, out of which none can pluck them; that he is able to keep them from falling, and to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

2. The fitness of his person; having taken the human nature into union wish his divine person, he is very proper to be the mediator between God and man, to be a days man to lay his hands on both, to take care of things pertaining to the law and justice of God, and the honour of them; and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; a work which neither angels nor men were fit for and capable of; but God in his infinite wisdom found Christ to be a proper person to give himself a ransom for his people, and deliver them from destruction, which is great joy unto them.

3. The fulness of his person; both the fulness of the Godhead, which dwells substantially in him, and the fulness of grace which it has pleased the Father should dwell in him, for the supply of the wants of his people; in which grace they are strong, and out of which they receive grace for grace, and "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation" in him (Isa. 12:5).

4. The beauty of his person; who is fairer than the children of men, white and ruddy, a complete beauty, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; to see him, the King, in his beauty, is a ravishing sight, and which fills with joy unspeakable and full of glory; "this," says the church after she had described him at large with an air of joy and pleasure, "this," this amiable lovely person, "is my beloved and my friend" (Song of Sol. 5:10-16). I take no notice of the offices of Christ, of prophet, and priest, and king; nor of the relations he stands in to his people of father, husband, brother, friend, though they are a fund of joy to true believers.

Secondly, There are other things which relate to the work of Christ, which are matter of joy to gracious souls; as salvation by him in general, everlasting righteousness wrought out by him in particular, and atonement of sin by his sacrifice.

1. Salvation in general; this is the work Christ was appointed to, which was given him, and which was with him when he came into the world, and which he came to do, and is become the author of; the church is called upon to rejoice in a view of his being about to come to effect it; and it is prophetically said of those who should be upon the spot when he came about this work, that they should say, "We will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation" (Zech. 9:9; Isa. 25:9), and both Old and New Testament saints have rejoiced in it, in a view of its certain accomplishment, of its fulness and suitableness to them, and of the glory of God displayed in it; "We will rejoice in thy salvation," says David (Ps. 20:7), and in such a frame of soul was

Mary, the mother of our Lord, when she said, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" and great reason there is for the exercise of spiritual joy on this account, since,

(1). It is a salvation of the souls of men, not of their bodies from temporal evils, but of their souls from everlasting destruction (1 Pet. 1:8, 9), it is a salvation of the soul, the more noble part of man, which is of more worth than a world, the redemption of which is precious, requires a great price to ransom, and must have ceased for ever, without any hopes of attaining it, had not Christ undertook it.

(2). It is for sinners, for the chief of sinners, which makes it a joyful sound; and he has the name of Jesus for this reason, because he "saves his people from their sins," than which nothing can be matter of greater joy to sensible sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Matthew 9:13; 1:21).

(3). It is a salvation of them from sin, even from all sin, original and actual; and from the guilt of it, and from punishment for it, and from all wrath to come it is deserving of; for Christ has delivered them from that, having sustained it in their room; and being justified by his blood they shall be saved from wrath through him; and indeed they are saved by him from every enemy, and from whatsoever they may fear any harm to come to them, sin, Satan, law, hell, and death.

(4). This salvation is entirely free; it is by grace and not of works; according to abundant mercy, and not by works of righteousness done by men. The blessings of salvation, signified by gold, fine linen, &c. are indeed to be bought, but without money and without price; that is, they are to be had freely; they are all of free grace; every part and branch of salvation is free; it is only looking to Christ and being saved; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22), and what joyful news is this!

(5). It is a great salvation, plenteous and complete; it is great, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" wrought out by a great Saviour, for great sinners; obtained at a great expense, the blood of Christ; and expressive of the greatest love; it is large and plenteous, it includes all the blessings of grace and glory; it is complete, it is from all sin and sorrow, and from every enemy; those that are saved, are saved to the "uttermost," and for ever; for,

(6). It is eternal; the Israel of God, all the chosen, redeemed, and called ones, are saved in the Lord with an "everlasting salvation;" Christ is the author of "eternal salvation" to his people; and he has, by his blood, obtained for them, "eternal redemption;" wherefore, "the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads" (Heb. 5:9; 9:12; Isa. 45:17; 35:10).

(7). It is exceeding suitable to the case and circumstances of sinners, and makes for the glory of God; such a Saviour as Christ is, becomes men lost and done in themselves; and such a salvation be has wrought out, exactly answers their necessities, and therefore cannot but be joyful to them; and the rather do they rejoice at it because of the glory of God, of all the divine perfections which is great in it; if the angels rejoiced at the good will of God to men in it, and sung glory to God on account of it, how much more reason have men to do so, who have hope of interest in it?

2. A branch of Christ's work in particular, which he had to work, and has wrought out, is everlasting righteousness; this, as a surety of his people, he was under obligation to fulfil, even all righteousness; he was sent, and came into the world, and was made under the law, that the righteousness of it might be fulfilled by him; and he is become the fulfilling end of it to them that believe; and such who are made to see their need of his righteousness, and are enabled to look unto it, and lay hold on it, as their righteousness before God, rejoice in it as the church did (Isa. 61:10), and there are many things respecting this righteousness which are matter and ground of joy to a believing soul.

(1). It is "the righteousness of God" which is "revealed from faith to faith" in the gospel; a righteousness wrought out by one that is God as well as man; which is approved by God, and well pleasing to him; and which he imputes without works: and being the righteousness of God, and not a creature's, it is unto all and upon all them that believe; and has a sufficient virtue in it to justify all the Lord's people; "all the seed of Israel" (Isa. 45:25).

(2). It is satisfactory to the law and justice of God; it is commensurate to all the demands of the law; that "commandment is" indeed "exceeding broad;" it is very extensive, and reaches to every duty, respecting God and man; but the righteousness of Christ is as large and as broad as that, and exactly answers to it;

and so secures from all condemnation by it; and being so complete, justice is well pleased and fully satisfied with it, spying no fault nor blemish in it; wherefore the Lord's people are presented by Christ in it to his Father, "unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:22).

(3). It acquits and absolves from all sin; by it those who believe in Christ are "justified from all things," from all sins; from which there is no justification by the law of Moses, there being some sins for which no sacrifice was provided by that law; but when a soul is clothed with this "change of raiment," the robe of Christ's righteousness, all his "filthy garments" are taken from him, and all his iniquities caused to pass from him, and he stands "without fault before the throne," before God, the Judge of all.

(4). It renders acceptable in the sight of God; such as have on the righteousness of Christ are "accepted in the beloved;" God is well pleased with him, and with them in him, and that for his righteousness sake; they are perfectly comely through his comeliness put upon them; they are all fair, and no spot in them; a perfection of beauty

(5). This righteousness of Christ is entirely free; it was freely wrought out by Christ, and is freely imputed to men; it is a free gift bestowed upon them, and as such is received by them; yea, faith, which receives it, is the gift of God; and therefore the justified ones are said to be, "justified freely by the grace of God" (Rom. 3:24).

(6). It affords much peace and comfort to those who see their interest in it; "This work of righteousness is peace:" the "kingdom of God," or reigning grace in the hearts of his people, lies in "righteousness and peace;" in the righteousness of Christ revealed unto them, and received by faith; the consequence of which is, peace of soul, and tranquillity of mind (Isa. 32:17; Rom. 14:17; 5:1).

(7). This righteousness is an "everlasting" one; it always continues to justify, and to be a constant ground of peace and joy; it can never be lost: the righteousness of Adam was lost, and so was that of the angels that sinned; but this will always remain, and be in sight before God, as the justifying righteousness of his people; "My righteousness," says the Lord, "shall be for ever" (Dan. 9:24; Isa. 51:6, 8).

(8). It entitles to eternal life; without a righteousness none can "inherit the kingdom of God;" and it must be a better righteousness than a man's own, that can give a man entrance into the kingdom of heaven; but being justified by that, men are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" hence justification by the righteousness of Christ is called, "The justification of life" (Titus 3:7; Rom. 5:18).

3. Another part of Christ's work, and a very principal one, was to make atonement for sin; this was the work appointed for him in council and covenant, and declared in prophecy; namely, "To make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24), and for this purpose he became man, "To make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" and in the end of the world appeared in human nature, "To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 2:17; 9:26), and by that one sacrifice he has made perfect expiation of the sins of his people, and which is matter of exceeding great joy unto them; "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," being reconciled to God by the death of his Son (Rom. 5:10, 11), and great reason there is for it, since full and complete pardon of sin proceeds upon it; God, for Christ's sake, and upon the foot of his atoning sacrifice, forgives all trespasses; an application of which forgiveness, causes joy and gladness, and makes the bones which were broken to rejoice; a sense of pardoning grace fills the soul with thankfulness to God, and yields abundance of spiritual consolation; and in this way God would have his people comforted by his ministers (Isa. 40:1, 2).

Thirdly, besides the person and work of Christ, there are other things either antecedent to it, or consequent on it; which are matter of joy to believers in him. As,

1. His incarnation, in order to do his work; this is spoken of by the evangelic prophet, as if it was over in his days, it being so certain to him and other believers; "To us a child is born;" and this he represents as occasion of great joy, that men would rejoice on account of it "according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Isa. 9:3, 6), times of as great rejoicing as can be well named; and when it actually came to pass, the angel who brought the tidings of it to the shepherds, said, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy!" (Luke 2:10, 11), and the disciples who first had knowledge of the incarnate

Saviour, how did they exult and rejoice, saying, "We have found the Messiah!" they describe their joy as such who had found a great spoil; as the prophet Isaiah foretold (John 1:41, 45).

2. The sufferings and death of Christ, by which he accomplished the work of redemption and salvation; for though they were painful to Christ, and in some respects occasion mourning to saints, whose sins were the cause of them; yet they make up a great part of the gospel of salvation; a crucified Christ is indeed the sum and substance of it; which, though foolishness to some, and stumbling to others, is to them that are saved the wisdom and power of God; this is the first and grand article of it, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and makes it the good news it is, and the saying worthy of acceptation; it affords matter of exultation, and even of glorying and boasting (Gal. 6:14).

3. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, after he had finished his work, is another source and spring of joy; as an angel brought the good news of the incarnation of Christ, so likewise of his resurrection from the dead; to the women who attended the sepulchre of Christ, the angel who rolled back the stone from it said, "He is not here; for he is risen;" the tidings of which they brought with joy to the disciples (Matthew 28:6, 8), and what joy did the disciples express on this account; "The Lord is risen indeed," say they, "and has appeared to Simon!" and still more when they saw him themselves; "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (Luke 24:34; John 20:20), and such and so many are the benefits arising from the resurrection of Christ, as well as from his sufferings and death, that believers can take courage and say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" not only because Christ has died, but "rather" because "he is risen again," risen again for their justification (Rom. 8:33, 34; 4:25).

4. The ascension of Christ to heaven, and his exaltation there, give joy to his saints; it did to his disciples, who were present at his ascension; for when he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; instead of sorrowing for it, "they worshipped him," and "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:51, 52), and all true believers by faith "see Jesus crowned with glory and honour," sitting at the right hand of God, highly exalted above every name, angels, authorities, principalities, and powers being subject to him; and he having received gifts for men, which he bestows upon them, even unworthy and rebellious ones; all which affords them the greatest joy and pleasure; "The Lord reigns, Let the earth rejoice" (Ps. 97:1).

5. The intercession of Christ; his appearing in the presence of God for his people, his advocacy with the Father, his ever living to make intercession for them, is matter of great joy, and from which they receive much benefit; this brings up the rear of those things which lay the foundation of the triumph of faith; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" this is supported not only by the death of Christ, and by his resurrection from the dead, and by his session at the right hand of God; but by his intercession there; "Who also maketh intercession for us," and answers to, and removes all charges brought against, them. And whereas to them that look for him, he will appear a second time without sin unto salvation, the forethoughts, and foreviews, and firm belief saints have of it, cause them to exult in their present state; "To look up, and lift up their heads, since their redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Fourthly, some things under the gospel dispensation, and respecting that are the objects of the joy of gracious souls. As,

1. The ministration of the gospel; this is matter of joy to all sensible and awakened sinners; the three thousand pricked to the heart under Peter's sermon "gladly" received the word, preaching pardon and salvation by Christ; when Christ was preached in Samaria there was "great joy" in that city, in such who believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God; when the jailor, who said to the apostles, "Sirs, What must I do to be saved?" had the word of the Lord spoken to him, and to them in his house, he "rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house:" and there is great reason for it; it is the gospel of salvation, which publishes the good tidings of it; and when accompanied with the Spirit of God, it is the power of God unto salvation; it is the voice of Christ, the bridegroom, and everyone that hears and knows that voice "rejoiceth" greatly because of it; it is a joyful sound of love, grace, and mercy, of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation; it is food to hungry souls; the sincere milk of the word, by

which newly born babes are nourished and grow; and by those of riper age it is esteemed more than their necessary food; they find the word, and eat it, and it is "the joy and rejoicing of their hearts."

2. The administration of ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper; which give such views of Christ in his sufferings and death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, and of the benefits arising from them, as yield delight to believing souls; the eunuch, upon his baptism, "went on his way rejoicing;" the supper of the Lord is a "feast of fat things," a rich entertainment, where the flesh of Christ, as "meat indeed," and the blood of Christ, as "drink indeed," are presented to faith to feed upon; these ordinances are "breasts of consolation," at which saints may "suck and be satisfied," and "milk out," and be "delighted" with the abundance of the glory in them; these are the "lattices" through which Christ shows himself, and these the "galleries" in which he is beheld, to the great joy and satisfaction of those who are favored with a sight of him.

3. The prosperity of the interest of Christ; whether it be through the numerous conversions of men, and additions of them to the church, gives joy, as when Paul and Barnabas, as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, in their way from Antioch to Jerusalem, declared the conversion of the Gentiles, "it caused great joy to the brethren" (Acts 15:3), or whether through peace, love, and unity, prevailing and subsisting among the saints, which give pleasure to all the well wishers to Zion's prosperity; as it did to David, who prayed earnestly for it (Ps. 122:6-9).

4. The reign of Christ, both spiritual and personal, will cause great joy in the saints. His spiritual reign, and the more glorious appearances of that, when the kingdoms of this world shall become his; upon which the four and twenty elders, the representatives of gospel churches, will, with the greatest solemnity and reverence, "give thanks" to him, because he has taken to himself his "great power and reigned" (Rev. 11:15-17), and when antichrist, and the antichristian states, shall be destroyed, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, and the Jews converted, these voices shall be heard in heaven, the church, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. 19:1).

5. And especially when Christ himself shall appear, and his tabernacle shall be with men: and an anticipation of all this by faith, gives to believers a joy and pleasure now; that things will not always be in the state they now are, but in a much more happy one, even on the earth.

Fifthly, The heavenly glory and happiness of a future state to all eternity, is the object of the saints present joy; when they shall actually possess it, they will then "enter into the joy of their Lord;" into the place of the celestial feast, [30] to partake of it, where will be fulness of joy; (see Matthew 25:10), and even now they can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" believing, that whereas they "suffer with" Christ, they shall be "glorified together;" and that when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall "appear with him in glory!" and in the faith and hope of this they rejoice and are glad.

II. The author and cause of this spiritual joy.

1. The efficient cause is God, he who is the object is the author of it, God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and which is therefore called, "The joy of the Lord" (Neh. 8:10; 12:43). It is "the God of hope," the object, author, and giver of that grace, who "fills with joy and peace in believing" in Christ (Rom. 15:13), who is God the Father: Christ himself is the author of this joy; and he calls it, "my joy;" as it is both objectively and efficiently; it is he that gives "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (John 15:11; Isa. 61:3). And the Spirit of God is concerned in it; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and is ranked with the first of them (Gal. 5:22), and is called, "joy in the Holy Ghost;" because produced by him (Rom. 14:17).

2. The instruments or means of it are, the ministers of the gospel, through the ministration of the word, and the administration of ordinances; they are the bringers of good tidings of good, the publishers of peace and salvation, and the means of spreading much joy among the saints (Isa. 52:7), they do not pretend to have "dominion over the faith" of believers, but to be "helpers of their joy" (2 Cor. 1:24).

III. The nature and properties of this joy.

1. It should be constant: the exhortations to it are, "Rejoice evermore," and "rejoice in the Lord always!" (1 Thess. 5:16; Phil. 4:4), and there is great encouragement from the Lord always to rejoice in him; and the character of the saints and people of

God in this present state of things is, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10), yea, the apostle James exhorts believers, to "count it all joy, when they fall into divers temptations," or afflictions, since these all work for good; are for the trial, brightening, and increasing the graces of the saints, and for the glory of God (Jam. 1:2,3). Yet,

2. It is imperfect in the present state, and often interrupted; sometimes, through the prevalence of indwelling sin, and the breakings forth of the corruptions of the heart; so that saints have no rest in "their bones," no joy in their hearts "because of their sin;" and cry out with the apostle, "O wretched" men that they are! this was sometimes the case of David, Isaiah, and the apostle Paul (Ps. 38:3; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 7:23, 24), sometimes through the temptations of Satan, who throws his fiery darts, which give pain, and sorely grieve; and when he has leave, sifts as wheat is sifted, which occasions great disquietude and distress; and beats and buffets, which causes great trouble and uneasiness; and he goes about like a roaring lion, to frighten and terrify when he cannot devour. And also through divine desertions, for when God hides his face from his people, they are troubled; nay, left in such darkness and distress, as even to be distracted with terrors, and ready to die; as was the case with David, Heman, and others. Yet,

3. This joy may come again, be restored, and greatly increase: joy sometimes comes in the morning, after a night of darkness; and the joys of salvation have been restored after the bones have been broken, through backslidings and falls into fin; yea, there may be an increase and overflow of joy; and it is promised, "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord" (Isa. 29:19), this is done by enlarged discoveries of the love of God, directions into it, and a fresh shedding abroad of it in the heart; by Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings; by some renewed sights of Christ, and appropriating views of him; and by an increase of faith in him; for as that grace grows, there is a furtherance of joy, called, "The furtherance and the joy of faith;" it is in a way of believing souls are filled with joy and peace, and through a sight by faith of an unseen Jesus. Meditation on the love of God, and person of Christ, contributes much unto it; and prayer is often a means of it; God makes his people joyful in the house of prayer: the preaching of the gospel is frequently blessed to this purpose; it has a tendency to promote spiritual joy; and, indeed, the end and design of it is, "that joy might be full" (Phil. 1:25; Isa. 56:7; 1 John 1:4).

4. It is a joy that is unknown to the men of the world; a "stranger," one that is a stranger to God and godliness, to Christ and the things of Christ, to the Spirit and to the gospel, "intermeddles not" with it, has no experience of it, nor share in it (Prov. 14:10), it passes the understanding of a natural man; it is an enigma, not to be unriddled by him, that the saints should be "sorrowful," and "yet always rejoicing!"

5. It is unspeakable; not to be fully expressed by those who experience it; it is better experienced than expressed; it is something like what the apostle Paul felt when caught up to the third heaven; and it is "full of glory," being concerned with eternal glory and happiness; it is a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God" (1 Pet. 1:8; Rom. 5:2).

6. It is a joy that cannot be utterly lost or taken away in the present life; the principle of it always remains, though it is not always in exercise; the ground work and foundation of it always continues, the unalterable love of God, and the person and grace of Christ; "your joy no man taketh from you;" and in the future state it will be "full" and complete (John 16:22, 24).

---

[28] Institut. l. 3. c. 24. s. 4.

[29] Disput. Public. Thes. 15. s. 14.

[30] "Verba dominica vix aliter grammatice, quam de diaeta seu coenaculo possunt intelligi, quod dominus charan, vel appellasset, vel inscripsisset," Pignorius de Servis, p. 489.

Chapter 11

OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY OF MIND

Next to Love and Joy, in order, stands Peace; now to be treated of; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. 5:22). "Charity," or "love," and "peace," are sometimes mentioned together (2 Tim. 2:22), and where the one is there is the other; especially if joy is in company with love, peace must be an attendant. Concerning which may be considered,

1. What peace is meant, and is designed to be treated of. Not an external peace; such as is sometimes

enjoyed by whole bodies of men; as in nations, when free from wars and rumours of wars; and in churches, when at rest from persecution, and clear of animosities and contentions among themselves: and in good men, when at peace with their neighbours; which they are to follow after, and cultivate as much as in them lies; and when God sometimes makes their enemies to be at peace with them: and in individuals, when every man sits under his vine and fig tree, none making him afraid; and enjoying much prosperity and happiness. But it is an internal, spiritual peace of soul, which is to be inquired into; which is an ease of mind from distress through sin and a sense of wrath.

First, sin, upon conviction, is made exceeding sinful, and is very distressing; this is usually through the law; "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" not only of external acts of sin in life, but of the inward lusts of it in the heart; "I had not known lust," says the apostle; that is, that it was sin, "except the law had said, Thou shall not covet;" and when such knowledge is had of sin, it appears "exceeding sinful," very odious, and gives great uneasiness (Rom. 3:20; 7:7, 13), when the guilt of sin lies heavy upon the conscience, it is a burden too heavy for a guilty sinner to bear; as it was to David (Ps. 38:3, 4), and especially where there is not a glimpse of pardoning grace and mercy; as in Cain. There is a conscience in every man; and when it does its office, it causes great anxiety, grief, and trouble, more or less; when the mind is opened by conviction, under a work of the law, wrath is let into the conscience; "The law worketh wrath;" along with the knowledge of sin by the law, wrath from heaven is revealed in it against all unrighteousness and ungodliness; and it leaves a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation against it; which wrath sometimes lies so hard and heavy as to cause terror, and even distraction; as in Heman (Ps. 88:7, 15, 16). So that sin convicted of, makes dreadful work in the heart of an awakened sinner; such are pricked and pained at their very hearts; and in their compunction cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" they are wounded with a sense of sin, and the arrows of divine wrath stick fast in them; the hand of God presses them sore; their wounds are grievous and intolerable; for "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" This inward distress is sometimes expressed by outward gestures and words; as by smiting upon the breast, not daring to look up to heaven; as in the publican, crying out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and by smiting upon the thigh; as in Ephraim, saying, he was ashamed and confounded, because he bore the reproach of his youth (Luke 18:13; Jer. 31:19), such usually express themselves as the three thousand did, convinced under Peter's sermon, inquiring the way of salvation; "What shall we do?" or more explicitly, with the jailor "What shall we do to be saved?" lamenting their lost and undone state, in the words of Isaiah, "Woe is me, I am undone!" Now,

Secondly, spiritual peace is a deliverance and freedom from this distress; which in general is wrought by the Spirit of God, being the comforter of convinced sinners; for that is his particular and peculiar work; he first convinces men of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and then he comforts them, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to them: he does by them as God did with the people of Israel of old, allured them, and brought them into the wilderness, and then spake comfortably unto them; he causes them to see their sicknesses and their wounds, as he did Ephraim and Judah, and the inability of themselves and others to cure them, and then he heals and binds them up. And all this he does more particularly,

1. By leading them to the blood of Christ, by which their wounds are healed; "With his stripes we are healed;" that is, with the blood flowing from them (Isa. 53:6), the blood of Christ is the balm in Gilead, the panacea that cures every wound, and he is the physician there; he is the "Sun of righteousness" that arises on distressed souls in beams of light, and joy, and love, and with "healing in his wings;" which healing is no other than pardon of sin, and the application of it (Ps. 103:3), the consequence of which must be, joy, peace, and tranquillity of soul; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!" (Matthew 9:2), for what can make a soul more cheerful, and give it more peace and pleasure, than a view of pardon by the blood of Jesus, and this given by Jesus himself? through an application of pardon, guilt is removed from the conscience, the burden is taken off. The blood of Christ applied, cleanses from all sin, takes away the guilt of every sin, and leaves none behind; the heart sprinkled by it from an evil conscience, is purged from dead works, which lay as an heavy

encumbrance upon it; "Blessed therefore is he whose transgression is forgiven;" or is lifted up, as the word signifies; which is lifted up from the sinner, and taken off from his conscience, as a burden on it, and he is eased of it. It is in this way that peace is spoken to a guilty sinner; hence the blood of Jesus is said to "speak better things than that of Abel;" the blood of Abel called aloud for vengeance on the shedder of it; but the blood of Christ speaks pardon and peace to condemned criminals. Peace is made for enemies and rebels by the blood of Christ; and this blood, by the Spirit of God, applied to such consciences who have been awakened by him, produces peace and quietness there; let a soul be as it were in a storm and tempest, if pardon by the blood of Christ is pronounced, all is hush and quiet in a moment.

2. By leading to the righteousness of Christ; a man's own righteousness will not yield him any solid peace; for there is no justification nor salvation by it; and it must at best be very variable, unstable, and inconstant; since man's righteousness is very imperfect, he sins in all, and in the best he does; and it is at most but while he is doing, or thinks he is doing, something good, that he has any peace; but when there is any interruption in doing, or he ceases from it, his peace is broken. But the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, pure, and spotless, by which a man is justified from all his sins, lays a solid foundation for peace. "Every religion, says Beza, [31] which opposes anything to the wrath of God, than the alone innocence, righteousness, and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, apprehended by faith, robs God both of his perfect justice and mercy; and therefore is false, and formed to deceive men." This being revealed and applied to a sinner, and faith wrought in him to receive it, as his justifying righteousness before God; and the sentence of justification by it pronounced in his conscience by the Spirit of God, produce peace in it; hence righteousness and peace are mentioned together, the one as the fruit of the other (Rom. 5:1; 14:17; Isa. 32:17).

3. By leading into the truths of the gospel; which is the Spirit's work, and in doing which he acts the part of a comforter; "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come," before spoken of as a comforter, "he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), it is not by the law that peace is had, that was delivered in a storm, in the midst of blackness, darkness, and tempest; and they that heard it, were terrified with it, and entreated it might not be spoken to them any more; and surely they that desire to be under it, do not hear it, so as to understand the voice of it; for it pronounces the whole world guilty before God; it curses in case of a breach of any of its commands; it is the killing letter, the ministration of condemnation and death. But it is by the gospel, and the truths of it, which the Spirit of God enlightens the minds of men into, and makes application of, that peace is enjoyed; that is called, "The gospel of peace," not only because it proclaims peace made by the blood of Christ, is the word preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and the ministers of it, the publishers of that peace; but because it speaks peace to the conscience of a sinner, when Christ comes by his Spirit, and preaches peace unto them, and makes the word effectual to such a purpose the various truths of the gospel have a tendency to speak comfort to them, and to free them from that spirit of bondage, the law has brought them into, and holds them in, for that genders to bondage, encourages and increases it; but they that "know the truth," the truth of the gospel, spiritually and experimentally, especially that great truth, free and full salvation by Christ for sinners, "the truth shall make them free," set them at liberty, and fill them with joy and peace (John 8:32).

4. By leading them into the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; which, as it is a covenant of life, so of peace; and is a covenant of peace which cannot be removed; and is so called, not only in relation to the article in it, concerning peace to be made by Christ, the Mediator of it; but because it lays a lasting foundation for peace and comfort; its blessings are the sure mercies of David, spiritual, solid, and substantial ones, and which last for ever, which are founded in the free sovereign grace and will of God, and come to men through Christ being made a curse for them. The promises of it are exceeding great and precious; great in themselves, their origin, matter, and use; and precious to them that believe, and see their interest in them; these, fitly and seasonably spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver; and being opened and applied by the Holy Spirit of promise, afford strong consolation to the heirs of promise; what peace did a view of covenant interest in its blessings and promises yield to David, amidst his sinful infirmities,

and the troubles of his family! (2 Sam. 23:5).

5. By leading them into the love of God; for this is the Spirit's work; by whom not only the love of God is shed abroad into the hearts of his people, which occasions peace and joy, and even glorying in the midst of tribulations; but they are directed and guided by him into it; "The Lord," that is, the Lord the Spirit, as he stands distinguished from the other persons in the text, "direct your hearts into the love of God," kateuthunai, direct, as in and by a straight line, immediately into it, not in a round about way, in a long train and course of duties, and from thence to fetch the evidence of interest in the love of God; which, at best, makes it very precarious, and leaves great disquietude and uneasiness: but when the Spirit leads directly into a view of interest in it, and bears witness to it, and grants a delightful sensation of it, the effect of this is solid, permanent peace; "There is no fear in love;" the love of God the Spirit leads into; "But perfect love casteth out fear," slavish, distressing, tormenting fear; where that has a place, the other removes, and instead of it, or the effect of it, is tranquillity and peace of mind (1 John 4:18).

Now this peace is enjoyed through faith in Christ; the God of hope "fills with all joy and peace in believing;" in believing in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; they that trust in him are kept "in perfect peace;" as their faith is, so is their peace; if their faith is steadfast, their peace is permanent: and it is much enjoyed also in the use of gospel ordinances; gospel churches, under the power and influence of a gospel Spirit, are "peaceable habitations, and quiet resting places;" gospel ordinances are ways of pleasantness, and "paths of peace," these are the "still waters" or "waters of quietness," or rest, [32] beside which the saints are led; and the "green pastures," where they are made to lie down and take their ease and rest. I go on to inquire,

II. Who are the subjects of this peace; or who are possessed of it.

I. Not sinful men, or unregenerate sinners; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21), whatever outward peace and prosperity they may enjoy, they have no inward spiritual peace; though "they are not in trouble," as other men, in outward trouble, as to body or estate; nor in soul trouble, or in a concern about their immortal souls, and the welfare of them; yet this ease is no other than stupidity, and a carnal dangerous security and indolence; and is owing to the ignorance of themselves, and of their state; "The way of peace they know not," the way to true peace with God, and peace of conscience; for while they cry, "Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them" (Rom. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:3).

2. Nor self-righteous persons, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and fetch their peace from thence; but their trust is a spider's web, and such webs shall not become garments; nor shall they cover themselves with their works; and so shall not have peace and comfort; and of them it is said, "the way of peace they know not" (Isa. 59:6, 8), and to such self-righteous persons Jehovah says, "I will declare thy righteousness," what a vain, useless thing it is in the business of justification before God, and with respect to peace to a man's self, "and thy works, for they shall not profit thee," in the affair of salvation, and to give peace and comfort (Isa. 57:12, 13).

3. Only justified and pardoned sinners have true, solid peace in themselves; those who are justified by Christ's righteousness have peace with God through him, and whose sins are pardoned through his blood, they are blessed, and blessed with peace; for with such righteous and happy ones it will be well at death, and to all eternity; when they die they enter into peace, and rest in their beds; the end of the perfect and upright man is peace; he enjoys much now, and shall be perfectly possessed of it hereafter.

4. Believers in Christ, and who trust in the Lord, enjoy true peace of soul (Isa. 26:3), such whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, are "not afraid of evil tidings;" these do not disturb their peace, let them come from what quarter they will; from the suggestions of their own hearts, from the temptations of Satan, or from the world and wicked men in it; the falsehood of which they are soon able to detect; and their faith and trust in God fortifies them against them.

5. Spiritually minded persons have a large share of inward peace of soul; "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6), they who mind carnal and earthly things, though they seek peace to themselves in this way, do not find it; for "a man's life" the peace, comfort, and happiness of it, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" for though he promises himself much peace, and that

lasting, in the goods he has accumulated and laid up; yet these may be soon taken away from him, or he from them.

6. They that love the law of God, his doctrines, ordinances, ways, and worship, usually enjoy much peace of soul; this the Psalmist attests by his own knowledge and experience; "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165), or thy doctrine, especially the doctrine of peace, pardon, and salvation by Christ; such who have drank into this doctrine experimentally, find peace in their souls; nor are they easily offended with what they meet with in themselves or from others: they are sons of peace, who receive the gospel of peace; and they enjoy much who walk in wisdom's paths, which are "paths of peace;" and such who worship God according to the rule of his word, peace is upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

7. They are the people and children of God who are the subjects of this peace; "The Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11), his covenant people, the people given to Christ, and saved by him, and who are effectually called by his Spirit and grace, and who are the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; "Great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54:13), the children of the church, the children of Christ, and the children of God; all to whom the Spirit of adoption is given, crying, "Abba, Father."

Now the seat of this grace in these subjects, is the heart and mind; for it is an internal frame of mind, it rules in the heart, and keeps and guards the heart and mind (Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7), it lies in the breast of a saint; and what protects, preserves, and keeps it there is, "the breastplate of faith and love," of faith in Christ and love to him.

III. The author and causes of this peace.

1. The efficient cause is God; hence called "the peace of God," because it comes from him; and he "the God of peace," because he is the author of it, even God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Sometimes the Father is meant; "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus;" that is, the Father of Christ, who raised him from the dead, to whom his resurrection is often ascribed (Heb. 13:20), and peace is often wished from him as in most of the Epistles; and also from Christ the Son of God, who is not only the peace maker, but the peace giver, in whom and from whom the saints have peace, when in the world tribulation; "My, peace I give unto you," &c. (John 16:33; 14:27), and peace is expressly called a fruit or grace of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and is prayed for from all the three persons together (Rev. 1:4, 5).

2. The moving cause of it is the grace and goodwill of God; grace is always wished for along with it, and is usually set before it, as being the spring of it; and the angels in their song sung, "Peace on earth, and goodwill towards men," signify that the peace men had on earth was owing to the goodwill of God towards them (Luke 2:14).

3. The instruments of it are the word, and the ministers of it; the gospel is the word not only preaching peace by Christ, but the means of administering peace to distressed minds; and the ministers of it, by publishing peace, are the instruments by whom the Lord speaks peace to wounded conscience.

IV. The nature and properties of it.

1. It is a gift of God, and which none can give but himself, and an excellent one it is, worth praying for and worth having; "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thess. 3:16), it is a free gift, unmerited, and springs from grace, and is what the world cannot give (John 14:27).

2. It is a blessing; the Jews, when they wished happiness to any, it was usually in this form, "Peace be to you," that including all prosperity in it; and when the Lord blesses his people it is with peace (Ps. 29:11). And,

3. This is called "great" peace (Ps. 119:165), it is great in quality, and sometimes great in quantity, abundance of it, peace like a flowing river.

4. It is said to be "perfect" (Isa. 26:3), though sometimes saints "for peace" have "great bitterness," as Hezekiah had, yet the ground and foundation of their peace is perfect, solid, and substantial; as the love of God, which is unchangeable, the covenant of peace which can never be removed, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, which have always the same virtue and efficacy.

5. It is a peace which "passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), of a natural and unregenerate man, who is a stranger to it, has no experience of it, intermeddles not with it, and can form no judgment about it.

6. It is what cannot be taken away; "When he

(God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29), not at that time at least; and though it may be interrupted, it cannot be destroyed; not by the world's tribulations, nor by Satan's temptations, nor by a man's own corruptions.

---

[31] Confessio fidei, c. 3. art. 26. p. 16.

[32] my mnchvt Psalm 23:2.

Chapter 12

OF CONTENTMENT OF MIND

Contentment of mind naturally follows upon Joy and Peace; where joy abounds, and peace rules in the heart, contentment is; it is nowhere to be found but in a godly man; in Christians of the first rank and class: the heathens talked much of it, but were not found in the practice of it; and, indeed, few men are; it is "rara avis in terris;" an ungodly man is an utter stranger to it; the ungodly are like a troubled sea, never at rest. Contentment is a branch of true godliness, or rather a super addition to it; which makes it greatly ornamental and profitable; for "godliness, with contentment," is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6). And it will be proper to inquire,

1. What it is; and it is no other than an entire acquiescence of a man's mind in his lot and portion, in his state and condition in the present life, be it what it may, prosperous or adverse. And,

First, as opposites serve to illustrate each other, this may be known by what is contrary to it, or by what it is contrary unto; as,

1. Contentment and envy are contrary to one another; "envying and strife" go together, and where there is strife and contention there is no contentment, but "confusion and every evil work;" a man that envies the superior or equal happiness of another, neither of which he can bear, inwardly pines [33] and frets at it. Envying and fretting meet in the same persons, and are equally dehorted from; and are evils to be found in good men, when they observe the prosperity of the wicked, and dwell upon their own afflictions (Ps. 37:1, 7; 73:3), and are contrary to that "charity" which "envieth not;" to rest and acquiescence in the will of God, which becometh saints; and where the sin of envy is predominant, a man can have no true contentment of mind; "envy is rottenness of the bones," it gnaws upon a man, torments him, [34] eats out his very vitals; "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one" (Prov. 14:30; Job 5:2).

2. Contentment is opposite to avarice, and avarice to that; and therefore the one must be quitted in order to possess the other. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5), a covetous man cannot be a truly contented man; he cannot be content with what he has, he always wants more. [35] The Greek word for "covetousness" is pleonexia, "a having" or a desire to "have more;" not but that there may be a lawful desire of having more in some cases and for some good ends and purposes, and in submission to the will of God; but it is an anxious, immoderate, and unbounded desire of more which is criminal; and especially to have it in an unlawful way, and when a person has much already; it is often usual with men to fix upon the pitch of wealth and riches they are desirous of attaining to, and think if they could attain to that they should be content; now such persons, until they arrive at such a pitch, must be all the while in a state of discontent; and should they arrive to it they are not sure of content; nay they seldom have it, but then enlarge their desires and extend their limits; in short they never have enough, but are like the horseleech, crying, "Give, give," more and more; and in other things persons of this complexion are like that creature, of which naturalists [36] observe it has no passage through, it takes in all it can but lets out nothing; as a covetous man grasps at all he can, but will part with nothing; and like the said creature, which breaks and bursts with its own fulness.

3. Contentment is opposite to pride and ambition. A proud ambitious man cannot bear that any should be above him, or upon a footing with him; and when he observes this, it gives him uneasiness, and fills him with disquietude and discontent; yea let his pride and ambition be ever so much gratified, he is not content, he still wants more; for the proud man "enlarges his desires as hell," or the grave, and like that "cannot be satisfied," which, how full soever, never says, "It is enough" (Hab. 2:5; Prov. 30:16), for though the

world is set in their hearts, and they have all that is in it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," they are not content; as it is reported of Alexander, when he had conquered the whole world as he thought, sat down and cried because there was not another world to conquer; so boundless were his pride and ambition, and so little contentment had he in his acquisitions. [37]

4. Anxiety of mind, or a distressing care about worldly things; as about food, drink, and raiment, is contrary to true contentment of mind; and therefore our Lord dissuades from it by a variety of arguments; which may be read in (Matthew 6:25-34). "Take no thought for your life," &c. to do this is to act below the creatures; they might learn better things from them: besides, such anxious care is needless, and of no avail, nothing is to be got by it; God will take care of his people; the grand point is, to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and leave all other things with him; which is the best way to have contentment and happiness.

5. Murmurings and repinings under adverse dispensations of providence, are the reverse of contentment of mind; such as are frequently to be observed in the Israelites in the wilderness, who were a discontented people, often murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and repining at afflictive providences; and from which Christians are dehorted by their example; "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured;" and murmurers and complainers are joined together, and both must be reckoned among discontented persons; for which murmurs and complaints there is no reason, not even under afflictive providences: not with the people of God; for their afflictions are fatherly chastisements; nor with wicked men, though they are punishments; for "wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" since it is less than he deserves (Lam. 3:39).

Secondly, what contentment of mind is, may be learned from the several phrases by which it is expressed in scripture. As,

First, By being contented with what a man has; "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5), tios parousin, "with present things;" things future are not the object of contentment; a man is not to look to things to come for it; which he may never have; and if he should have them, cannot promise himself contentment in them, as before observed; but they are present things, things he is now in the possession of, he should be content with.

1. Be they more or less, whether a man has a larger or a lesser share of the things of this world, whether riches or poverty, a man should be content; it was a wise petition of Agur, "Give me neither riches nor poverty; feed me with food convenient for me," or that which is sufficient and enough (Prov. 30:8), but be it either, a man should be satisfied with what God gives; if God gives him riches, he should be thankful, knowing that these come of God; and if they increase, he should not set his heart upon them, considering they are uncertain things, fleeting ones, make themselves wings and fly away; and therefore should be prepared for the loss of them, and be content when so it is; and the way to be content with what a man has at present, is rather to magnify it in his own mind than to lessen it; and to think, that God has "given him all things richly to enjoy;" so said the apostle when he had but little (1 Tim. 6:17). It may be said, a man may very well be content with present riches; but how can he be content with present poverty? He may; for poverty is no disgrace to a man, when it does not come through negligence and sloth; many a good man and an honorable Christian have been poor; God hath "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" Lazarus, now in Abraham's bosom, was once a beggar; and our Lord himself became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. The advice of the apostle James is, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted;" exalted in Christ, and made a partaker of the riches of grace, and has a right to the riches of glory through him.

2. Men should be content, as with present advantages and growing profit, so with present losses, which might have been greater; as Job was with the loss of his substance, his children, and his health, and perhaps all in one day; saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1:21); for let the saint lose what he may, he cannot lose his God, his portion, and his all, his Redeemer and Saviour, his better and more enduring substance, his inheritance reserved in the heavens; and therefore takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods, and is content with the loss of earthly things.

3. With present reproaches, indignities, and ill

usage from men, on account of religion; like Moses, esteeming reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt; yea, our Lord pleased not himself, but was content to bear all the reproaches of the people on him; and who for the encouragement of his followers, pronounces them blessed when reviled and reproached (Heb. 11:25; 2 Sam. 16:10-12; Rom. 15:1-3; Matthew 5:11).

4. With present afflictions of whatsoever kind, whether from God or men; for in whatsoever way, they rise not out of the dust, nor come by chance; but according to the will and appointment of God; and though not joyous, but grievous, yet sanctified, yield good fruit, and work together for good; and are the means of making men more partakers of divine holiness; and those light present afflictions, which are but for a moment, work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Particularly,

5. "Having food and raiment;" food for the present day, and raiment for present use, skepasmata, coverings from the inclemencies of weather, among which houses to dwell in are included; "Let us," says the apostle, "therewith be content;" this was all that Jacob desired to have; and which sometimes good men have been without, and yet contented (1 Tim. 6:8; Gen. 28:20; 1 Cor. 4:11). But are saints to be content with present grace, present knowledge, present experience? &c. They may desire more grace, an increase of faith, and every other grace, as the apostles did; they may earnestly covet the best gifts, and yet not envy nor repine at the superior gifts and graces of others; they may forget things behind, and press towards those before, and yet be thankful for past experiences, and for present ones; and bless God for the measure of spiritual light and knowledge they have, and yet humbly desire an increase, and make use of proper means for that purpose; though the apostle, in the text referred to, seems to have respect only to temporal things.

Secondly, this contentment of mind is expressed by the apostle from his own experience; "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

1. The apostle means not his state of unregeneracy; he says not, "in whatsoever state I have been;" but, "in whatsoever state I am;" an unregenerate man is content to be in such a state, like Moab of old, at ease from his youth, and settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, but remains quiet and undisturbed; repents not of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? is in no apprehension of any danger, but like a man asleep and secure in the midst of the sea, and on the top of a mast; and, indeed, it is the business and policy of Satan, the strong man armed, to keep the goods in peace: a state of unregeneracy is a state of ignorance of God, and of his righteous law, and a state of unbelief, in which state the apostle had been (1 Tim. 1:13), and while in it, he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ; and imagined himself to be in a good state and condition, and alive without the law: it was not only a sinful state; but a state of self-righteousness; when the apostle thought himself, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and so safe and secure, and greatly contented with it; but this is not here meant. But,

2. His state after conversion, his spiritual state, it may be; believing his covenant interest in God; "My God shall supply all your need," &c. and being persuaded of his interest in the love of God, and that nothing should separate him from it; knowing Christ in whom he had believed and being satisfied of his ability and faithfulness to keep what he had committed to him, and of his being found in him, not having on his own righteousness, but his; and in this the apostle was content; yea, with the worst part of his spiritual state, even when in temptation, when buffered by Satan; since he was assured, that "the grave of Christ was sufficient for him;" and since Christ is able to help them that are tempted, and prays for his tempted ones, that their faith fail not; knows how to deliver them that are tempted, and that in the best manner, and in the most seasonable time; therefore they are contented: as they are also even in times of desertion and darkness, when they are directed and encouraged to trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on the mighty God of Jacob, and to wait for him that hides his face from them, as the church was determined to do (Micah 7:7-9), and there is great reason for this contentment, faith, and expectation; since light is sown for the righteous, and to the upright it arises in darkness (Ps. 97:11; 92:4). But,

3. The apostle chiefly means his outward state after conversion; with which he was content: and which

lay,

(1). In his afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions; these attended him wherever he came, and he expected them, and not only bore them patiently, but endured them with pleasure; "I take pleasure," says he, "in reproaches, in necessities," &c. yea, he gloried in them (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

(2). In his bonds and imprisonment; in such a state he was when he expressed his contentment in whatsoever state he was, and so in that; for he was in bonds, a prisoner at Rome, when he wrote his epistle to the Philippians; (see Phil. 1:13, 14), and he seems to show a sort of pride in his title and character as the Lord's prisoner, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph 3:1; 4:1), and reckoned himself so happy a man on all other accounts, that he wished king Agrippa, and all in court, were altogether as he was, excepting his bonds; and though he did not wish them to others, he was content with them himself.

(3). The phrase, "in whatsoever state," includes both prosperity and adversity; an abundance and a scarcity of the necessaries of life; a fulness, and want of them, as explained in the next verse; the wise man says (Eccl. 7:14), "In the day of prosperity be joyful;" that is no hard lesson to learn: "But in the day of adversity consider" from whence it comes, and for what end, and be content with your portion; this is not so easily learnt; the apostle had learned it: as also,

(4). To be content both to live and to die; since he was persuaded Christ would be "magnified in his body, whether by life or death;" and though he knew it would be much better for him to depart and be with Christ, which was desirable by him; yet it would be more to the advantage of the interest of Christ, and the good of the churches, to continue longer on earth; this put him into a strait; however, he left it with God, and was content to depart or stay, as he thought fit: some good men, in a fit of discontent, have wished to die, and have expressed an uneasiness at life, by reason of their troubles and afflictions; as Job, and the prophets Elijah and Jonah, which was their infirmity; but one that has learned the lesson of divine contentment, and is under the influence of that grace, he is content to live while God has anything to do by him, and he is content to die, when he thinks fit to dismiss him from service. Now such a disposition of mind, as to be content in every state of life, appears in a man's thankfulness for all he enjoys; when, as advised, "in everything," in every state, and for everything, be it what it may, he "gives thanks;" when he makes known his requests to God with thanksgivings, for what he has had, and asks for what he wants in submission to his will; thus Job blessed God for what he gave him; and when he took it away from him. This grace shows itself much in a quiet resignation of the will to the will of God, in what condition soever a man is, especially in adverse dispensations of providence; instances of which we have in Aaron, in Eli, in David, and others; as also in bearing cheerfully all things which are disagreeable to flesh and blood; as in the apostles, who departed from the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ; and in the believing Hebrews, who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and in the apostle Paul, who took pleasure in reproaches and distress for Christ's sake.

(4). The word used by the apostle in the place under consideration for content, autarkes, properly signifies "self-sufficient," or being sufficient of one's self; which, strictly speaking, and in the highest sense, is only true of God, who is "El Shaddai," God all-sufficient, who stands in need of nothing; nor does the goodness of any extend to him, nor is it of any avail unto him; he is blessed in himself, and can have no addition to his happiness from a creature; but in a lower sense is true of some men; who, though they have not an inderivative sufficiency of themselves, yet receive a sufficiency in themselves from God; a sufficiency of spiritual things; "his grace is sufficient for them," and they have a sufficiency of it to bear them up under temptations, trials, and exercises of life, and to carry them through them; the God of all grace, as he is able to make, so he does make all grace to abound towards them, that they always having all sufficiency of grace thus received from him, may abound in the performance of every good work; a sufficiency of strength is given, so that they can do all things required of them through Christ strengthening them; and which is the reason the apostle gives of his being able to conduct in every state of life as he did (Phil 4:13), and a sufficiency of temporal things is given to the Lord's people, at least so as to answer to their exigencies, and even to give them content; and especially when they have Agur's wish, neither riches

nor poverty, but food convenient for them; or "which is sufficient," as some versions have it (Prov. 30:8).

(5). This lesson of contentment is explained by what the apostle says in the following verse; "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; both to be full and to be hungry;" that is, he knew by experience what these things meant, and how to behave in such circumstances. As,

(1). To be "abased," or humbled, treated with contempt by men, and to be in low and mean circumstances; as when he was obliged to work with his own hands, and these ministered to his own and to the necessities of others; and when in very distressed circumstances, in voyages and journeys, shipwrecked, and in perils on various accounts, in pain and weariness, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; and he had learned to bear all these things patiently, and with submission to the will of God, and to be content with them. Also,

(2). He knew how to "abound," or what it was to be high in the esteem of men, and to have an affluence of the things of life, an abundance, a fulness of them, at least, as he judged it; and he knew how to behave in the midst of plenty, as not to be elated with it, and carry it haughtily to others; he learned not to abuse it, but to make a good use of it, for the relief of the necessitous, and for the interest of religion.

(3). He knew what it was both to be "full" and to be "hungry," to have a full meal and to want one; to be at a good table, and to be almost starved and famished; and he was "instructed" of God, how to conduct in such different circumstances, as neither to abuse his fulness, nor repine at his wants; and for confirmation, and to show how deeply his mind was impressed with these things, he repeats them, "both to abound and to suffer need," to have an overflow of things, and to be entirely deprived of them; and yet in all to be content. To be stripped of everything, to have nothing, and yet be content, is wonderful! if a man has something, though but little, there is a reason for contentment; but for a man to have nothing and be content, this is extraordinary; and yet this was the case of the apostle and his brethren, who were sometimes hungry, and had nothing to eat; thirsty, and nothing to drink; naked, and no clothes to put on; and had no dwelling place to shelter them from inclemencies; and yet content: the truth of these words, and the riddle in them, the apostles knew, and knew how to solve; "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things;" and this made them contented.

Thirdly, this contentment of mind is expressed by a man's having enough. Esau, who was a worldly man, and Jacob, who was a spiritual, upright, and plain hearted man, both said they had enough (Gen. 33:9, 11), but in a different sense; and, indeed, they use different phrases; for though they are the same in our version, yet not in the original; Esau at first refused the present of his brother Jacob, saying, "I have enough;" ys ly rvg, which may be rendered, "I have much;" now a man may have much, and yet not have enough in his own account; he may have much, and yet may want more, and so not be content: [38] but Jacob urged his brother to take his present, saying also, "I have enough;" or rather, as it should be rendered ys ly klg "I have all things," or "every thing;" and a man that has everything, has enough indeed, and has reason to be content; and this is the case of every gracious man, and these the circumstances of every true believer in Christ, as will be seen hereafter; and therefore ought to be content.

Fourthly, this contentment is expressed by a man's being satisfied with what he has: earthly riches are not satisfying things, especially to such who are greedy of them, or have an immoderate love for them; one that knew human nature full well says, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Eccl. 5:10), but riches of grace are satisfying; the unsearchable riches of Christ, all spiritual things, are of a satisfying nature to spiritual men; the Lord "satisfies their mouth with good things;" with the provisions, the goodness, and fatness of his house; the poor of Zion he satisfies with spiritual bread; he satiates the weary soul, and replenishes every sorrowful soul (Ps. 103:5; 132:14; Jer. 31:25), especially the love of God is exceeding satisfying to a gracious soul; "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour," with the love of God, "and full with the blessing of the Lord," even to contentment; such as are favored after this manner "are satisfied as with marrow and fatness" (Deut. 33:23; Ps. 63:5), and, indeed, a little of the good things of this life, and the love of God with them, are more satisfying, and give more contentment, than all the riches of the world can without it (Prov. 15:17). I proceed to inquire,

II. How any come by true contentment of mind.

1. It is not natural to man; man is naturally a discontented creature, especially since the fall; nay, it was discontent which was the cause of that; our first parents not being content with the state of happiness in which they were, abode not in it, but fell from it; such was their ambition, prompted to it by the tempter, that they affected to be as God; or however, perceiving there was a class of creatures superior to them, more wise and knowing, they could not be content with their present case and circumstances; but wanted to be upon an equality with them; and being told, that by eating the forbidden fruit they would attain to it, took and eat of it, and thus by coveting an evil covetousness, lost the happiness which they had; hence it is most truly said of man, that he is, "at his best estate, altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5).

2. It is not to be found in a natural or unregenerate man; such a man is always uneasy and disquieted; as restless as the troubled sea, and the waves thereof; let him be in pursuit of what he may, he never arrives to it to satisfaction; is it wisdom and knowledge he seeks after, as his first parents did? he gets no content; but finds, that in much wisdom is much grief and vexation of spirit; and that, by an increase of knowledge sorrow is increased. Is it pleasure in the gratification of the senses? these are soon palled with it, and new pleasures are wanting; and these, when had, like the former, issue in bitter reflections and remorse of conscience. Is it worldly honour, fame, and applause of men? these are fickle, transitory things, not to be depended on, and seldom last long; and amidst them there is something that mars the pride and ambition of men; as Mordecai's not bowing to Haman made the latter uneasy and discontented, notwithstanding the profusion of honours conferred upon him. Or is it wealth and riches? these are very uncertain and unsatisfying things, as has been observed. There is nothing can satisfy the mind of man but God himself; and if a man lives without God in the world, let him have what he will, he lives a discontented life; none but a godly man is a contented man; there may be content with godliness, but without it there is none.

3. Contentment is a thing that is to be learned; but not in the school of nature, and by the help of carnal reason; the philosophers among the heathens talked of it, but did not enjoy it; they neither learnt it themselves, nor could they teach it others; by all their wisdom and knowledge they knew not God truly, and therefore could have no solid satisfaction in what they did know; and even by what they knew of God, they glorified him not as God, "neither were thankful;" and if not thankful, then not contented. The apostle Paul says, he "learnt" it; but he learnt this not at the feet of Gamaliel, where he was brought up; nor among the traditions of the elders, where it is not to be found; for though he was taught after the perfect manner of the fathers of tradition, he was left ignorant of God, and of his law, and of Christ and his righteousness, and of salvation by him; without which there can be no true contentment: but he learnt it, being taught it of God; he had it as he had the gospel; and, indeed, he learnt it by that; which he says, he "neither received of men; neither was taught it, but in the revelation of Jesus Christ; he was instructed in it by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ;" so that he learnt it of God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

4. This is learnt, not as a theory; but practically and experimentally; and by a train of experiences, and generally through a series of afflictive providences; so that it is learned in quite a different way than a carnal man can conceive of; for these very things which breed discontent in others, are the means of producing true contentment in gracious souls. The apostle Paul learned to be content, not only "in," but "by," the adverse providences which attended him; by his dangers at sea and by land; by his distresses, afflictions, and persecutions for Christ's sake; and so other saints have been instructed in some measure, in the same way, and have found it true, what the apostle says (Rom. 5:4), "Tribulation works patience," &c. in such afflicted and experienced souls; and from all this flows contentment.

III. The arguments moving to such a disposition of mind, and exciting, under a divine influence, to the exercise of this grace, are,

First, the consideration of what we had when we came into the world; and what we shall have when we go out of it; which is just nothing at all: this is the argument the apostle uses to promote contentment in himself and others; "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain, we can carry nothing out;" and therefore upon it reasons thus; "and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:7, 8), and that is enough for the present state, and is more

than we shall carry with us, or shall hereafter have any need of; and this was what made Job contented with the loss of all he had; "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;" and now, as if he should say, I am stripped of all, I am but as I was when I was born, and shall he again when I die; [39] and therefore I am content; the "Lord gave" all that I have had from my birth, "and the Lord has taken away," and he has taken only what he gave, and to which he had a right; "blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21), and the like argument the Wise Man makes use of to show how fruitless and unprofitable it is for a man to be anxious to get perishing riches, and which his son, begotten by him, may not enjoy; but come into the world naked, and go out in like manner (Eccl. 5:14-16), and this is a reason urged by the Psalmist, why it should give no pain and uneasiness to persons at the increase of the riches of others; since, "when he dies he shall carry nothing away;" so that as it will be no longer his, it will remain to be enjoyed by others (Ps. 49:16, 17).

Secondly, the unalterable will of God is an argument exciting contentment; who does according to his will, as in the armies of the heavens, so among the inhabitants of the earth; he gives to everyone their portion in this life as he thinks fit. What they have is not to be attributed to their wisdom and sagacity, and to their diligence and industry, however commendable these may be; but is to be ascribed to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who does all things "after the counsel of his will," in the wisest and best manner; and therefore men should be content; and after all, they cannot make things otherwise than they are; for "who can make that straight which he hath made crooked" (Eccl. 9:11; 7:13), nor can any man, with all his care and thought, "add one cubit to his stature," or make any change in his condition and circumstances, than what is according to the will of God.

Thirdly, unworthiness to enjoy the least favour and mercy at the hand of God, should engage us to be content with what we have: we have reason to say, as Jacob did, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10), not of the bread we eat, nor of the clothes we wear; yea, if God was to deal with us according to our deserts, we should be stripped of all; and, indeed, it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed; and therefore have great reason to be content; since we merit nothing, have forfeited all, and cannot claim anything as our due; what is enjoyed is pure favour (Ps. 145:9).

Fourthly, a consideration of the great things which God has done for us; a dwelling in our thoughts, and meditation on what may excite thankfulness in us; a recollection of the benefits of every kind which God has conferred upon us, may tend very much to make us contented with what we have, giving thanks unto his name; where there is a proper sense of favours there will be thankfulness; and where there is thankfulness there will be content.

Fifthly, the great promises God has made to his people of good things, here and hereafter, on the fulfillment of which they may depend, are sufficient to make them easy and contented; this is an argument used by the apostle to engage to contentment (Heb. 13:5), where he says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!" which promise itself, containing every favour and blessing, and securing everything that can be needful for comfort and happiness, is of itself enough to excite to contentment. But besides this, there are many other exceeding great and precious promises; as, they that fear the Lord shall lack no good thing; that God will supply all their need; that his grace will be sufficient for them; that as their day is, their strength shall be; yea, godliness has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; and therefore that, with contentment, is great gain.

Sixthly, eternal glory and happiness; which is promised, prepared, and laid up for the saints, and which they will most certainly enjoy, may serve to make them content with present things, and even with some things that are not agreeable to the flesh; thus Moses having respect unto the recompence of reward, and a view of invisible things, cheerfully suffered affliction with the people of God, and esteemed reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; the sufferings of this present life are not to be compared with the glory of another; and though the saints now may have their evil things, they will hereafter have their good things, and shall be fully satisfied when they awake in the divine likeness; and therefore for the present should be content with their lot and portion.

Seventhly, the saints and people of God have all things in hand, or in promise, or in sure and certain

hope; "all things are yours;" and therefore they may say, as Jacob did, "I have enough," or "I have all things;" I am content: God has given us all things richly to enjoy; all things pertaining to life and godliness, both grace and glory; and what more can be desired?

1. God is theirs, Father, Son, and Spirit; all the perfections of God are on their side, and exercised for their good; and all the divine Persons are theirs, and they have an interest in them; and what can they have more?

(1). God the Father is theirs; he is their covenant God; he says, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people!" and he not only avouches them to be his peculiar people; but they say, "The Lord is God!" and avouch him, profess him, and claim their interest in him as such: he is their Father, and has declared himself in covenant to be so; has predestinated them to the adoption of children; sent his Son to redeem them, that they might receive it; and his Spirit to witness it unto them. He is their shield and exceeding great reward, as he promised to Abraham; he is their portion now and for ever; and what, not content!

(2). Christ the Son of God is theirs; the gift of his Father's love, an unspeakable one he is; given as an head unto them; as an head of government, to rule over them and protect them; and an head of influence, to supply them; he is their husband, to love, nourish, and cherish them, as his own flesh, and to all whose goods they have a common right; he is their Saviour and Redeemer from sin, Satan, the curse of the law, and wrath to come; he is their Mediator and Peacemaker, their Prophet, Priest, and King. All that belong to him are theirs; his righteousness is theirs, for justification; his blood is theirs, to cleanse and pardon them; his flesh is theirs, to feed upon by faith; his fulness theirs, to supply their wants; he is ALL in ALL unto them; and what, not content!

(3). The Spirit of God is theirs; a gift which their heavenly Father has given them; and is given them to make known unto them the things which are freely given to them of God; he is the convincer of them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; the illuminator of them in the knowledge of divine things; their quickener and sanctifier, their comforter, and the spirit of adoption to them; the earnest and seal of their future glory; theirs to begin, to carry on, and perfect the work of grace in them; and what, not content!

2. The covenant of grace is theirs; made with them, and made for them; all the stores of it theirs; the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David; the blessings of grace and of glory, provided and laid up in it; the promises of it, both respecting this life and that which is to come; and what, not content!

3. The gospel, and the ordinances of it, and the ministers of it, are theirs! "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas" (1 Cor. 3:21, 22), the whole Scripture is written for their use, for their learning and instruction, for their comfort and edification; the gospel is ordained for their glory; and is sent into and published in the world for their good; and the ministers of it are their servants for Jesus' sake; they are gifts to the churches, to be their pastors and teachers; and have gifts given them to feed and instruct them; they are stewards of the mysteries of grace, and are appointed in the house of God, to give to everyone their portion of meat in due season; and which surely must add to divine contentment.

4. Temporal things are theirs; "or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:22); the "world," and the fulness of it, belongs to Christ, who is heir of all things; and saints being joint heirs with him, are as Abraham was, "heirs of the world;" and things in it are theirs, and work together, and contribute to their good; and they at last shall inhabit the new earth. "Life" is theirs in every sense, corporal, spiritual, and eternal. And "death" is theirs, a blessing to them whenever it comes; which will deliver them from the troubles of this life, and enter them into the glories of another. "Things present" are theirs; present mercies, no good thing is withheld from them needful for them, food to eat, and raiment to put on: and "things to come;" the unseen glories of a future state; an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in "heaven," a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. And surely all this is enough to give contentment!

---

[33] "Invidus alterius rebus macrescit opimis," Horat. Epist. l. 1. ep. 2. v. 57.

[34] "Invidia Siculi non invenere tyranni majus tormentum." Horat. ib. v. 58, 59.

[35] "Semper avarus eget," ib. v. 56.

[36] Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 11. c. 34.

[37] "Unus Pellaeo juveni non sufficit orbis: aestuat infelix angusto limine mundi," Juvenal. Satyr. 10. v. 168, 169.

[38] "Nunquam parum est; quod satis est, nunquam multum est, quod satis non est." Seneca, Ep. 119.

[39] "Nemo tam pauper vivit quam natus est." Seneca de Providentia, c. 6.

Chapter 13

OF THANKFULNESS TO GOD

Thankfulness follows contentment: a discontented man is not thankful for anything; but a contented man is thankful for everything. Thankfulness is a branch of godliness; none but a godly man is truly a thankful man: there are some things not to be named among saints, and are not becoming them; but this is; and rather becoming them than many other things (Eph. 5:3,4), an unthankful saint is a very odd sound, if not a contradiction; "unthankful, unholy," are characters joined together, and agree (2 Tim. 3:2), and so "unthankful" and "evil" (Luke 6:36), and particularly none but an holy man can give thanks "at the remembrance of the holiness of God" (Ps. 97:12). Concerning this gracious disposition of mind, thankfulness, may be observed,

1. The things for which thanks are to be given; and they are all things; the rule, and which is, according to the will of God, is "giving thanks always for all things;" and again, "In everything," or for everything, "give thanks" (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18), to which agrees what the apostle says (Phil. 4:6). And,

First, for temporal mercies; for God is the "Father of mercies," even of all such mercies; the author and giver of them, and therefore thanks should be returned to him for them. As,

1. For our beings; to be, is better than not to be; and none could give us existence but God, the fountain of being; "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" that is, we have it from him, as well as are supported in it by him; "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:--be thankful unto him, and bless his name" (Acts 17:28; Ps. 100:3,4), the wonderful formation of man, the structure of his body, the symmetry and perfection of its parts, as well as soundness of limbs, are matter of praise and thankfulness; as they were to the Psalmist David (Ps. 139:14-16).

2. For our life, which is from God; he "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25), some creatures have a being, and yet not life, as inanimate ones; some have life, yet only a vegetative one, as plants; and others only an animal one, as brutes; but God has given to man a soul, both living and rational; Adam's body was made out of the dust of the earth, and then God breathed into him the "breath of life, and man became a living soul;" and such a life every man has, which is a grant and favour from God (Job 10:12), and therefore thanks should be given to him for it, and for all the mercies of life, and for that more than for them; since "the life is more than meat," or drink, raiment, and everything by which life is nourished, supported, and made comfortable; and, indeed, is preferable to all a man has besides (Matthew 6:25; Job 2:4).

3. For the preservation of our being and life be God; his visitation, which is every day, every morning, preserves our spirits; he upholds our souls in life; he is therefore truly called, the "preserver of men," and is worthy of praise and thanksgiving on that account; the reason given is, not only because he has made the heaven, earth, and seas, and all therein; but because he "preserveth them all" (Neh. 9:5, 6).

4. For our health, and for the continuance of it, and for restoration to it when it has been interrupted; health is a very valuable mercy, and without which the outward blessings of life cannot be comfortably enjoyed; and therefore is greatly to be desired, both by ourselves and for our friends; thus the apostle John wished for Gaius, that he might "prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered" (3 John 1:2), and persons favored with such a mercy have reason to be thankful; as also when it has been lost and restored again; thus Hezekiah, when recovered from his sickness, said, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day" (Isa. 38:9, 19), and a contrary behavior, as it very unbecoming, is justly resented; as in the of the ten lepers (Luke 17:15-18).

5. For every mercy enjoyed, be it what it may; not only for life and health, for food and raiment, which are the principal mercies; but for every other, the least that can be thought of (Gen. 32:10). "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;" so that it seems

the goodness of any creature mercy to a man depends upon his thankfulness for it; and this is the difference between a thankful and an unthankful man: an unthankful man, thinks nothing good; and a thankful man thinks everything good, and blesses God for it (2 Tim. 4:4), and this he does every day; mercies are returned every day, and are new every morning; and therefore men sensible of them will say, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits!" (Ps. 68:19).

Secondly, for spiritual mercies, whether of a lower or of an higher kind. As,

First, for the means of grace, the gospel, and the ministry of it; and a great mercy it is to be under the sound of it; "Blessed is the man that heareth me," the voice of wisdom, the gospel of Christ, though only externally (Prov. 8:34). It is an happiness to be born in a land where the gospel is preached, and not among Pagans, Mahometans, and Papists, where there is a "famine;" not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of "hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8:11), and a dreadful judgment it is on a people when the Lord commands "the clouds," the ministers of the word, "that they rain no rain upon them," that is, preach not the gospel to them. The gospel was first restrained to the Jewish people, and forbid to be preached to the Gentiles; but afterwards the apostles had a commission to preach it to all nations; the Gentiles embraced it gladly, glorified it, or were greatly thankful for it; and when this is blessed to the conversion of sinners, it is matter of thankfulness; not only to them, but to all true believers, and to the ministers of the word: when the Jewish Christians perceived that God had given repentance to the Gentiles also, they glorified God, or were thankful to him, and blessed his name; and when the apostles declared the conversion of the Gentiles by the ministry of the word, it caused great joy among the brethren; and when they were successful in all parts, in making conquests of souls to Christ, they could not but express their thankfulness to God, saying, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14), and when it is food to believers, and is sweet to their taste, as the honey and the honeycomb, and they esteem it more than their necessary food, then are they truly thankful for it. It is in itself glad tidings, and a joyful sound; and when it is experimentally heard and known, it causes praise and thankfulness, even among personages of the highest class; "all the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth;" the doctrines of the gospel, so as to understand them, as they will in the latter day glory (Ps. 138:4), when the gospel ministry will be the means of enlarging the interest of Christ, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Lord's and his Christ's, then the four and twenty elders, the representatives of gospel churches, will "worship God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned," by making the gospel ministry effectual to the enlargement of his kingdom and interest (Rev. 11:15-17). To which may be added, as means of grace, the ordinances of the gospel, called the goodness and fatness of the house of God, the provisions of Zion; which, when saints are blessed with, and especially when blessed unto them, and made useful and beneficial, they "shout aloud for joy," or are exceeding thankful for them: and with these may be mentioned, the ministers of the gospel, who are the gifts of God to his churches; "And he gave some pastors and teachers;" gifts to qualify them for such offices; and he gives them themselves to his churches, to officiate as such among them; "And I will give you pastors" (Eph. 4:11; Jer. 3:15), these are reckoned among the blessings and privileges of churches, and of all true believers; "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;" and therefore they have reason to be thankful for them; and especially when, though their "teachers have been removed into a corner," yet not so "any more," but their "eyes see their teachers," and their ears hear the joyful sound from them.

Secondly, thanks are to be given particularly for the blessings of grace themselves, the things which are freely given of God. And in order to thankfulness for these, in men there must be knowledge of them; which is had by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; and there must be an application of them, a view of special interest in them; the Spirit of God must witness to their spirits that they belong unto them; he must take of the things of Christ, and show them unto them; which will cause exultation and thankfulness. As particularly,

1. For electing grace; this may be known without any special and extraordinary revelation; even from the grace in the effectual calling; "For whom he did predestinate, them he also called;" and the "vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory," are explained of those "whom God has called" (Rom. 8:30; 9:23, 24), so that those who are called by grace may comfortably conclude, that they are predestinated unto life, or are in the Lamb's book of life, and are foreordained unto eternal glory; and this may be known, as the apostle observes, from the efficacy of the gospel on the hearts of men (1 Thess. 1:4,5), and such therefore will call upon themselves and others to praise and thankfulness, saying, "Praise the Lord, for the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135:3, 4). And the rather this is matter of great thankfulness, because

(1). The choice God has made of men to everlasting life is of grace, and not of works; even of free, unmerited grace, and without any motive to it from them; hence called, "The election of grace" (Rom. 11:5, 6; 9:11-13). Something similar to this was the national election of the people of Israel, which was not because of their quality or quantity; but because of the Lord's pure love unto them (Deut. 7:6-8).

(2). This choice is an act of distinguishing grace; it is not a choice of all, only of some; or it would be no choice; "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18), all Christ's disciples were chosen to office, but not all to grace and glory; such so chosen are "vessels of mercy," in distinction from others, called, "vessels of wrath;" it is a choice of "us," and not others: of us, who are in no wise better than others, as undeserving of the favour of God as others, being "children of wrath," even as others.

(3). It is a choice, which is the source, foundation, and security both of grace and glory. Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, which include all grace, are fixed and secured in eternal election, and flow from it; men are chosen to faith and holiness before the foundation of the world, and these are in time bestowed upon them; "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed;" hence true faith is called, "The faith of God's elect," being peculiar to them, in consequence of their election, and with which their eternal happiness is connected; "For whom he did predestinate--them he also glorified." Now if the apostle thought himself bound to give thanks for the election of others, then much more for his own; and so is every chosen vessel of salvation; see (2 Thess. 2:13).

2. Thanks are to be given for redeeming grace. This was one of the benefits and blessings of grace, which lay uppermost on the mind of the Psalmist, when he called upon his soul, and all within him, to bless the name of the Lord, and not forget his benefits; "Who," says he, "redeemeth thy life from destruction" (Ps. 103:1, 2, 4), having in view, no doubt, the redemption of it by Christ, from everlasting ruin; thus Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, began his prophecy, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," and raised up a mighty Saviour and Redeemer from David's family; this he said, when the "day spring from on high had visited them;" the Saviour was conceived, and become incarnate, though as yet not born, who was to be the Redeemer of his people (Luke 1:68, 69, 78), and great reason there is for praise and thankfulness on this account.

(1). Because this redemption is special and particular. They are a "peculiar people" whom Christ has redeemed from all iniquity; they are "redeemed from among men," and so not all men; they are "redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;" and not every kindred, every tongue, all people, and each nation; and therefore have the greater reason to be thankful that they are redeemed.

(2). It is altogether free on their parts; though they are bought with a price, are redeemed from a vain conversation, with the precious blood of Christ, to which redemption is frequently ascribed; yet they are "redeemed without money," without any price or money of their own paid by them for it; it is wholly of free cost to them; they are "let go, not for price nor reward," which they have given; their redemption is indeed through the blood of Christ, and yet it is "according to the riches of the grace of God," who of his infinite wisdom and grace has found a ransom.

(3). It is a plenteous one; "With the Lord is plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130:7), a redemption from all iniquity, original and actual; from all sins of every kind, of heart, lip, and life, before and after conversion; from Satan, stronger than they, who held

them captive; from all the curses of the law, to which they were subject by sin; and from hell and wrath, and from every enemy of their souls.

(4). It is an eternal one; "Having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12), which will always continue; the redeemed will never more return to a captive state, or be brought into subjection to what they are redeemed from; but will always enjoy the benefits arising from this grace; and if therefore Moses and the children of Israel had reason to sing unto the Lord, who "in his mercy had redeemed them out of Egypt," which was but a temporal redemption; much more reason have we to praise the Lord, and give thanks to him for eternal redemption by Christ.

3. Thanks are to be given for pardoning grace and mercy. This is the first thing the Psalmist mentions after stirring up himself to bless and praise the Lord for all his benefits; "who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Ps. 103:1-3), and indeed pardon of sin is a great blessing; and he is an happy man whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity! and therefore should express his thankfulness for it. And,

(1). Because it is entirely free with respect to the persons who partake of it. It proceeds, indeed, upon a satisfaction made by another; for God, though he forgives sin, will by no means clear the guilty, without a full satisfaction to his justice; "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" but though Christ's blood has been shed for the remission of sins, yet that is according to the riches of divine grace; it is free to men, though it cost Christ dear, his blood and life (Isa. 43:25), some, their debts are more, and others less numerous; one owes five hundred pence, and another fifty; but whereas neither the one nor the other "have anything to pay," God, the creditor, "frankly forgives them both" (Luke 7:41, 42).

(2). Pardon of sin, is not only free, but full and complete; and therefore sinful men should be thankful for it; God not only forgives all manner of sin, signified by iniquity, transgression, and sin; greater or lesser sins, such as are more or less aggravated; but all acts of sin committed by his people; God, for Christ's sake, forgives all; "Having forgiven all trespasses" (Col. 2:13), no one sin is left unforgiven; the Lord's name be praised!

(3). Thanks are to be given for adopting grace; this is one of the spiritual blessings with which the Lord's people are blessed in Christ, "according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:3, 5). There is such a display of grace in the blessing of adoption as ravished the apostle John, and caused him to break forth in a rapture, and say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" (1 John 3:1). Two things serve to excite thankfulness for this grace:

(4). That it is bestowed on persons very unworthy; such who are by nature children of wrath, as others; and yet by this grace, children of God; such of whom God himself says, "How shall I put them among the children?" and yet of his grace puts them there; such who are like the wretched infant, cast out into the open field, in the day it was born, to the loathing of its person, and yet taken into the family of God; who have nothing lovely in them to recommend them, as Moses to Pharaoh's daughter, and Esther to Mordecai had; but all the reverse.

(2). The various blessings annexed to this grace; such have the glorious liberty of the children of God; liberty of access to God, as children to a father; and a right to all privileges and immunities, which fellow citizens with the saints, and those of the household of God have; these are never more servants, but heirs, and have a right to the heavenly inheritance.

5. Thanks are to be given to God for regenerating grace (1 Pet. 1:3, 4). This is wholly owing to the free grace and rich mercy of God; it is denied to be of blood, or of the will of men, or of the will of the flesh; but of God, of his sovereign grace and favour; who, "of his own will, begat us with the word of truth;" and the rather should we be thankful for this grace, since without it there can be no enjoyment of eternal life; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jam. 1:18; John 1:13; 3:3).

6. Thanks are to be given as for a right to eternal life; which lies not in the righteousness of men, but in the righteousness of Christ; so for a meetness for it, which is all of grace (Col. 1:12).

7. Thanks are to be given for victory over all spiritual enemies; and so for persevering grace in faith and holiness to glory, notwithstanding them all; nothing more distressing than a body of sin and death, and nothing more desirable than a deliverance from it; and yet no hope of it but through Christ; and

having hope of it in this way, such a soul may say with the apostle, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" that is, that there will be a deliverance from it; and not from that only, but from every enemy, sin, law, and death; and therefore can say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory;" over death and the grave; over sin, the sting of death; and over the law, the strength of sin; so that nothing shall hinder an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God (Rom. 7:23, 24; 1 Cor. 15:57).

Thirdly, for Christ, the great blessing of grace and gift of God: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15), the donor of this gift is God, of whom are all things; hence Christ is called the "gift of God," by way of eminence (John 4:10), who is a sovereign Being, and disposes of all his gifts, and so this, to whomsoever he pleases; it is his own he gives, and he may do with that what he will; and this is a gift like himself, suitable to the greatness of his Majesty, as King of kings; it is a royal gift, like that "Araunah, as a king, gave unto the king" (2 Sam. 24:23), the gift is the Son of God; "To us a Son is given;" the only begotten Son of God, his own Son, the dear Son of his love, his Son and Heir; him he has given to be for a covenant of the people, the Mediator and Surety of it, and with whom he has entrusted all the blessings and promises of it; and to be an head over all things to the church; and to be the Saviour of the body, the church; even to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth; for which purpose he has not spared him, but has delivered him up into the hands of men, justice, and death; and for which those to and for whom he is given, have reason to be thankful; when, besides these things, the nature of the gift is observed. As,

1. It is entirely a free gift; it is one of those things, and the chief of them, which are "freely given unto us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12), unmerited and undeserved; wholly of free grace, and flowing from the pure love of God, to persons of all the most unworthy (John 3:16).

2. It is a suitable one; nothing could have been given us more suitable to our case and circumstances; "Such an High priest became us;" such a Prophet, such a King, such a Mediator between God and men, such a Redeemer and Saviour, such an Advocate and Intercessor, one so full of grace and truth, who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, who is indeed ALL in ALL; all that we want, all that we can desire; for,

3. It is a very large and comprehensive gift; "God, with Christ, freely gives us all things; and blesses, with all spiritual blessings in him," the blessings of grace and of glory (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3), Christ being ours, all things are ours; and therefore we have reason to be thankful (1 Cor. 3:22, 23).

4. It is an unchangeable and irreversible gift; it comes from the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" and not only the giver, but the gift itself is unchangeable; who is "Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and for ever;" and is one of the gifts of God which are "without repentance;" to which may be added, that it is "unspeakable;" none can say how great it is, what is contained in it, and what the benefits arising from it in time and to eternity.

Fourthly, For the Spirit of God, and his gifts and graces. The Spirit himself is the gift of God (Luke 11:13), and a great and glorious gift he is, for which we have reason to be thankful; especially when we consider to what ends and purposes he is given, as to be a Comforter of his people, "He shall give you another Comforter" (John 14:16), and to be a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and to strengthen the saints with all might in the inward man, and to be the earnest and pledge of their future glory and happiness (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14, 17; 3:16). The various graces of the Spirit are gifts and free grace gifts, and very valuable ones; faith, which is of the operation of the Spirit, is "not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," which no man has nor can exercise unless it be given him of God; and all men have it not, and therefore it is distinguishing grace to those who have it, and should be thankful for it; a good hope is through grace, and is given both by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:16), and so love is from grace (1 Tim. 1:14). These are now the all things for which we should be thankful.

II. When, in what cases and circumstances, and for whom thanks are to be given.

1. When; always, this is the rule, "giving thanks always for all things;" every day, night and day, constantly, continually, all the days of a man's life; for there are ever new mercies, they are returning every day and every morning: hence says the Psalmist,

"Every day will I bless thee" (Ps. 145:2; 146:2).

2. In what cases and circumstances, in what state and condition, are we to be thankful? in everyone, "in everything," that is, in every state, "give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:18).

3. Not in prosperity only, when we are to be joyful, cheerful, and thankful; and when we are not to attribute our prosperity to ourselves, nor to second causes, but to God, and be thankful; otherwise we shall only "sacrifice to" our own "net," and "burn incense" to our own "drag" (Hab. 1:16).

2. But in adversity also; as Job blessed God, or was thankful, when he was stripped of all; and the people of God have reason to be thankful under afflictions, when the Lord puts underneath his everlasting arms, and supports them under them; when he strengthens them on a bed of languishing, and makes their bed in their sickness; when he chooses them in the furnace of affliction, and knows their souls in adversity; when he manifests his love and favour; when he is with them passing through the fire and water, so that the one shall not kindle upon them, nor the other overflow them; in short, since he makes all things work together for their good here and hereafter, they should be thankful. And also,

3. In times of temptation; since the temptation might have been suffered to have been greater and heavier than it is; and since the grace of God is sufficient to support under it, and carry through it, and the faithfulness of God will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able to bear; and since Christ is able to help them that are tempted, and sympathizes with them, and prays for them that their faith fail not.

4. When in very uncomfortable frames; at least better might be wished for, since these might have been worse and have issued in despair, or bordering on it; and in the midst of all it should be considered, that though frames are changeable things, Jehovah changes not, Christ is the same always, the covenant of grace is sure, and the gifts and calling of God without repentance; and the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall never perish.

5, Amidst all the reproaches and persecutions of men; so the apostles were thankful that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ; the apostle Peter says such are happy (1 Pet. 4:14), and such who are persecuted for righteousness sake are pronounced blessed by Christ, and are exhorted to rejoice, and be exceeding glad (Matthew 5:10-12).

3. For whom; for all men, for kings and all in authority (1 Tim. 2:1, 2), since these are powers ordained of God, and are ministers for the good of men, are terrors to evildoers, and a praise to them that do well; if they are good kings and worthy magistrates, such are to be honoured and obeyed, and thanks to be given for them, which is good and acceptable in the sight of God. We are to be thankful for our relations and friends, and for the continuance of them; children are the gifts of God to parents, and as such to be owned with gratitude, as they were by Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 33:5; 48:9 see Ps. 127:3-5), and likewise for the churches of Christ, and all the saints in them; for their prosperity, for their grace and the increase of it; for their faith, both as a doctrine and a grace, and for their love to one another; these are what the apostle expresses his thankfulness for in almost all his epistles; and so for the ministers of the gospel saints should be thankful, who are the gifts of God to the churches, and are promised as such (Jer. 3:15). These are the servants of the most high God which show unto men the way of salvation, and who are the churches' servants for Jesus' sake, faithful stewards in the house of God, to give to everyone their portion of meat in due season; and being thus useful, thanks should be given for them; and which likewise should be done for an increase of converts through the ministry of the word, when there are additions made to churches of such as shall be saved; when the gospel is succeeded for the gathering in of others to Christ and into his churches besides those who are already gathered (2 Cor. 2:14).

3. To whom are thanks to be given on the above account? to God, of whom are all things, and to whom the glory of all belongs; he is the proper and primary object of thanksgiving; "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all" (Rom. 1:8), God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

1. Thanks are to be given to the Father "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father" (Eph. 5:20), and hence the same apostle blesses or gives thanks unto him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for blessing the saints in him with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), and the

apostle Peter blesses or gives thanks to him as such for regenerating grace particularly (1 Pet. 1:3), and he is to be considered in such an act of thanksgiving as Christ's God and our God, and as Christ's Father and our Father; for as we are directed to pray to him, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven," so we should give thanks to him as such, saying, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1:3).

2. Thanks are to be given to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; and these are sometimes given to him particularly and alone, "I thank Christ Jesus the Lord," says the apostle (1 Tim. 1:12), and if thanks are to be given him on such an account as there, then certainly for other favours received from him; as for his suretyship engagements, for his assumption of human nature, for suffering and dying in the room and stead of his people, and for many other acts of grace done by him, and blessings of grace received from him. Besides, it is in the name of Christ, and through him, we are directed to give thanks to God (Eph. 5:20; Rom. 1:8), as it is proper we should, since all our mercies come to us through him; it is in him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, and it is out of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace; and all the grace that is wrought in us in regeneration, and in carrying on the work of sanctification, is all "through Christ;" nor can we come to God in any other way with, our thanksgivings but by him; he is the only way to the Father, the way of access to him with boldness and confidence; and therefore "by him" we are to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name" (Heb. 13:15). Nor are our spiritual sacrifices, either of prayer or praise, acceptable to God, but through Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom our persons are accepted, even in him the beloved.

3. Thanks are to be given to the blessed Spirit; for, as he is the object of prayer with the Father and the Son, so the object of praise and thanksgiving; and great reason there is, that as we should be careful not to vex and grieve the good Spirit of God with our ingratitude; so that we should be thankful to him for all that he has done for us; in quickening and regenerating us; in beginning and carrying on the good work of grace in us, and in sealing us up to the day of redemption. Besides many other acts of grace which might be mentioned.

Now this work of thanksgiving, is to be performed towards God with a celebration of the divine perfections, which are displayed in his acts of kindness to us; as we are to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, so at the remembrance of every other attribute of his; it is in this way the living creatures are said to give glory, and honour, and thanks unto God (Rev. 4:8, 9). This is also to be done by a recollection of the benefits of God, bestowed upon us; which, though so many that we are not able to reckon them up in order before him; yet, as much as in us lies, we are to call upon our souls to call to mind, and not forget, if possible, any of his benefits; and to inquire, what shall we render to him for them; (see Isa. 63:7), and this is to be performed with all our hearts, with all that is within us, with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and to the utmost of our abilities; as we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our strength; we are to give thanks to him in like manner, in the most intense way we are capable of; as we are to serve him with grace in our hearts in every branch of duty; so in this, even in the exercise of every grace.

IV. The reasons or arguments for giving thanks.

1. It is the will of God; and that is reason sufficient why it should be attended to (1 Thess. 5:18), it is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God made known in his word, which he has commanded and directed to; "Offer unto God thanksgiving" (Ps. 50:14), this is a sacrifice acceptable to him, and well pleasing in his sight (Ps. 69:30, 31), and the contrary is resented by him.

2. This is the will of God "in Christ Jesus," which is made known by him; who, lying in the bosom of the Father, has declared his whole mind and will to the sons of men; and this among the rest; and it is also to be given unto God in and through Christ, as before observed.

3. It is enforced by the example of Christ, who himself gave thanks to God, and that for the distinguishing blessings of his grace bestowed upon his people, according to his sovereign will and pleasure; "I thank thee, O Father," &c. (Matthew 11:25, 26). To which may be added,

4. The examples of saints in all ages, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; the book of Psalms is full of

instances.

Chapter 14

OF HUMILITY

After "love, joy, peace," mentioned as fruits of the Spirit, "long suffering, gentleness, and meekness," in which "humility" is included, are observed as fruits of the same Spirit also (Gal. 5:22, 23 and this naturally follows or accompanies "thankfulness," last treated of; an humble man is always a thankful man; whereas "proud boasters," are joined with the "unthankful, unholy" (2 Tim. 3:2). The proud philosophers would not allow of thankfulness to God for virtue and goodness: "That we live, is the gift of God, says Seneca [40] but that we live well, is owing to philosophy; and, adds he, by so much we owe the more to this than to God, by how much the greater a good life is than life itself." And says Cicero, [41] "No man refers virtue to God; if it was a gift of his, we should have no praise nor glorying: did ever any man give thanks to God that he was a good man!"

How contrary to this is that of the humble apostle (1 Cor. 4:7). Humility, or a "meek and quiet spirit," is a branch of internal worship, or of experimental religion and godliness; it is called, "The hidden man of the heart," (1 Pet. 3:4) and is very necessary in the performance of every part of external worship and service; "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19). In considering which I shall,

First, show wherein it lies, and in what it appears and manifests itself.

1. In a man's thinking meanly and the worst of himself, and well and the best of others; observing that rule of the apostle's, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," (Phil. 2:3) such an humble saint was the apostle himself, who reckoned himself, "less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners;" such an humble soul thinks no good man has such a sinful corrupt heart as he has; or has so much sin dwelling in it: one reason is, because his own sins and corruptions are more known to himself; while those of others lie more out of sight; he thinks every saint has more grace and holiness, more spiritual knowledge and experience than he has, and says with Agur, "that he has not the understanding of a man," that is, of a good man (Prov. 30:2), whereas, on the contrary, a proud Pharisee thanks God he is not as other men are, "such a great sinner" as others, and says, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou" (Luke 18:11; Isa. 65:5).

2. In not envying, but rejoicing at the gifts and graces of others. Humility is like charity, "it envieth not;" Moses was a very meek man, above all men which were upon the face of the earth, and he said to Joshua, "Enviest thou for my sake?" that is, the gifts bestowed on Eldad and Medad; "would God, that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Num. 11:29; 12:3). When David related his experiences of divine grace, his triumph of faith, and glorying in the Lord, he observes; "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad," (Ps. 34:2) so John the Baptist, when he takes notice of the vastly superior gifts, grace, usefulness, and success of Christ, says he, in a very humble and modest manner, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, 31).

4. In ascribing all he is and has to the grace of God; confessing that he has nothing but what he has received; and therefore would not glory, as though he had received it not; but says, with the apostle, "By the grace of God l am what I am," (1 Cor. 4:7; 15:10) he frankly acknowledges, that it is of the free grace of God alone, that he is elected, redeemed, justified, pardoned, regenerated, and shall be saved; and not through any works of righteousness done by him; and therefore gives all the glory to it.

5. In disclaiming his own righteousness, and submitting to the righteousness of Christ; the Spirit of God having convinced him of his want of righteousness, of the insufficiency of his own to justify him before God, and that after having done all he can, he is but an unprofitable servant; and that through pride in himself, and ignorance of God's righteousness, he heretofore submitted not to the righteousness of Christ, yet now he desires to be found in it (Phil. 3:9).

6. In a willingness to receive instruction from the meanest saint; "Give instruction to a wise man," if he is an humble man, and not a scorner, he will be thankful for it, "and will be wiser: teach a just man," not one that is righteous in his own eyes, and despises others, "and he will increase in learning," (Prov. 9:9) so Apollos, though an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, did not disdain to receive instruction

from Aquila and Priscilla, tentmakers, who took him and taught him the way of God more perfectly.

7. In kindly receiving admonitions given; and, indeed, it is only to such that they are of any advantage, and meet with success; a proud, haughty scorner rejects them with contempt (Prov. 9:8), an humble man will take the reproof well, and consider it as an instance of love to him, and will love the reprover more and better for it, as David says he should (Ps. 141:5).

8. In bearing patiently all injuries done to him, and putting up all affronts offered to him. Humility, like charity, is "not easily provoked," and "beareth all things:" humble saints will bear, "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;" such who "put on kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering," will not only bear with and forbear one another, but will "forgive one another, even as Christ forgave them" (1 Cor. 13:5, 7; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12, 13). When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, who is observed to be the meekest man on, earth; as an instance of it, he was so far from resenting the affront, that he prayed for Miriam that she might be healed of the leprosy with which she was stricken for it (Num. 12:1-3, 13).

8. In submitting quietly to the afflicting hand of God; humble souls are still under the rod, hearken to the voice of it, are obedient to it, patiently bear it without murmuring, humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and resign their wills to his; as Aaron, Eli, David, and others have done (Lev. 10:3; 1 Sam. 3:18; Ps. 39:9).

9. In not seeking great things for a man's self, and after things too high for him. It is good advice given to Baruch; "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not," (Jer. 45:5) an humble man will not: it is a sign of a proud, ambitious man so to do; to aspire after things out of a man's reach, and beyond his capacity; "Lord, says David, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me," (Ps. 131:1) especially it argues great pride and vanity, when a man seeks to be wise above what is written; an humble man will not pry into things secret, but will be content with what is revealed (Deut. 29:29). And therefore,

10. Humility appears in subjecting a man's reason to divine revelation; then is a man humble when every imagination, reasoning, and all high thoughts are cast down, and brought to the obedience of Christ in his word; when men have recourse to the law and to the testimony, to the sacred scriptures, and make them the standard of their faith; and, like the noble, diligent, and humble Beraeans, search into them, whether things be so or no; for "if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words," the doctrines of Christ contained in the scriptures, he is proud, knowing nothing (1 Tim. 6:3). This pride in men is the chief cause of all controversies and quarrels about religious things.

Secondly, Let us next consider from whence this grace of humility, or such a disposition of mind, arises.

1. Not from nature; but from the grace of God: man is naturally a proud creature, though he has nothing really to be proud of; not of his wisdom, which is but folly; nor of his wealth, which is uncertain and transitory; nor of his beauty, which is vain, and may be made to consume away like a moth; nor of his outward goodness and righteousness, which pass away like a morning cloud and early dew. Pride is one of those things which are within a man, in his heart, and proceeds from thence, and defiles him; but true humility is from God, from his Spirit and grace; and therefore meekness, or humility, is reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

2. From a true sight and sense of sin, and the evil nature of it, under the illumination and conviction of the Spirit of God; when sin appears to be "exceeding sinful," and such a sight is humbling: while a man is insensible of the inward corruption of his nature, and of the sin that dwells in his heart, and is so inattentive to the sins of life that he thinks himself in a manner blameless; he will, like the proud and haughty Pharisee, thank God he is not as other men are: but when a man comes to see the vileness of his nature, the swarms of sin within him, as well as the iniquity of his life, like the humble publican, not daring to lift up his eyes to heaven, will smite upon his breast and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and very often so it is that a sin which a man has been guilty of, though the guilt of it is removed from him, yet he retains such a sense of it, as that it keeps him humble all his days; this was the case of the apostle Paul, who, having been a persecutor of the church of

God, though he obtained mercy, and knew his sin was pardoned, yet a sense of that sin always abode with him, and was an humbling consideration to him (1 Cor. 15:9), and if a man has not any particular sin that thus affects him, yet the consideration of indwelling sin, and the daily infirmities of life, a sense of them will keep him humble continually.

3. From a view of the insufficiency of a man's own righteousness to justify him before God; while a man trusts in himself that he is righteous, he will be proud of himself, and despise others; while he fancies that, "touching the righteousness of the law, he is blameless," he will be stout hearted, and not submit to the righteousness of Christ; while a Pharisee has a few husks to fill his belly, and some rags of outward righteousness to his back, he will be as proud as Lucifer: nor will any man be truly humble until he finds himself "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" which, when it was the case of the apostle Paul, and not before, then he desired to be "found in Christ, and in his righteousness" (Phil. 3:9).

4. From a sight of the loveliness and glory of Christ; a sight of which will put a man out of conceit with himself, and make him look little and mean in his own eyes; as it did Isaiah, when he saw the glory of Christ in a very exalted and resplendent manner (Isa. 6:5). Christ is the Sun of righteousness; and, as with respect to the natural sun, it is in its own light we see it, and in a ray or beam of it behold innumerable motes, otherwise not discerned by us; so when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shines forth in his light, we see his glories and excellencies in their luster and splendor; and our own sins, failings, and infirmities; all which tend to humiliation. When that supernatural light shone about Saul the Pharisee, he became at once as humble and submissive as may be, and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" a sight of Christ, and of the glory of his person, though seen but through a glass, is transforming, and changes "into the same image;" one part of which image lies in meekness, or humility of mind.

5. From a view of the greatness and majesty of God, and of the frailty and vileness of man compared together: this was what humbled Job, and brought him to a right sense of things, and to a suitable behavior under the providence of God towards him; when, having contended with God, he is called upon by him out of the whirlwind to answer; and, being confounded with a sense of God's greatness and his own vileness, replied, "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer thee?" and still more plainly and fully, having observed the omnipotence and omniscience of God, thus humbly expresses himself, "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" (Job 40:4, 5; 42:5, 6).

6. From a spiritual knowledge of divine things; natural knowledge "puffeth up;" the wise philosophers among the heathens, with all their boasted morality, were as full of pride as men could well be; their characters are, "proud boasters," (Rom. 1:21, 30) a Pharisee, with all his knowledge of the law and of righteousness, is a vain empty man, and is proud of what he does not truly understand; and so he will remain, till he comes to know Christ and him crucified: and then he will "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," whom he only then will determine to know, and in whom he will glory; no man is truly humble till he learns that mortifying lesson, "If any among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3:18).

7. From an experimental knowledge of the gospel scheme; the tendency of which is, to stain the pride of man, to abase the creature, and exalt the riches of divine grace; to prevent men from glorying in anything of themselves, and to exclude all boasting in them: it places salvation entirely on the grace of God, to the exclusion of works, as the cause of it; the Spirit of God, in the gospel, blows a blast upon all the goodliness of men; and such who are evangelized by it, or cast into a gospel mould, that form of doctrine into which they are experimentally delivered, are always humble, meek, and lowly minded. I say experimentally, because men may have notions of evangelical doctrine, and be proud of these notions, not having a true experience of them.

Thirdly, the excellency and usefulness of this grace.

1. It is well pleasing to God; "A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price," highly valued (1 Pet. 3:4), the Lord takes pleasure in such, and therefore beautifies them, and puts an honour upon them; he looks at him that is poor, of a contrite

and humble spirit, with delight and complacency; and to such modest souls he says, "Let me see thy countenance--for thy countenance is comely;" when a proud look, and one proud in heart, are an abomination to him (Song of Sol. 2:14; Prov. 6:16, 17; 16:5).

2. It makes a man most like to Christ, who was prophesied of as lowly, meek, and humble; and who says of himself, and proposes himself for imitation, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly;" and the apostle beseeches the saints, "by the meekness of Christ;" and which appeared throughout his whole state of humiliation on earth; see (Zech. 9:9; Matthew 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1).

3. It is the saints' clothing and ornament; pride is the devil's livery; but humility is the clothing of the servants of Christ, the badge by which they are known; so some observe the word signifies a servant's garment in (1 Pet. 5:5), "Be ye clothed with humility;" not that it is the saint's robe of righteousness, and garment of salvation, or his justifying righteousness before God; rather his inward garment of sanctification, at least a part of it, which makes all "glorious within;" and it makes a great show it, a man's outward conversation; both in his walk before God, with whom he is required to "walk humbly;" and in his conversation before men, humility makes him to shine, and greatly recommends him; it is very ornamental to him; the word translated "clothed," in the above text, has the signification of ornamental knots, as some think; and a meek spirit is called an "ornament;" it is thought there is an allusion to the ornaments of women, and to knots of ribbons wore by them in one part or another as on their breasts; and it is as if the apostle should, say, Let others adorn themselves with knots as they will, but let your breast knot be humility.

4. It is of great use in various duties and exercises of religion; it is of use in prayer, to behave before God with a proper awe and reverence of him; considering, that he is in heaven and they on earth; that he is the great God and an holy Being, and they "dust and ashes," sinful dust and ashes, who take upon them to speak unto him: and such humble souls God regards; "he forgetteth not the cry of the humble" (Ps. 9:12), the prayer of the humble publican was heard, and he preferred to the proud Pharisee (Luke 18:14). It is of use in preaching the word; which should be done, not in an ostentatious way, to show a man's parts and abilities, and with great swelling words of vanity; but the Lord is to be served in the gospel of his Son, "with all humility of mind," and with a subjection to the word of God, as the rule. And it is of use in hearing and receiving the word; "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Acts 20:19; Jam. 1:21). And it is of use in giving a reason of hope, and making a confession of faith before men; "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear," (1 Pet. 3:15) which may have respect both to him that asks the reason, which should be asked, not in a haughty, insolent, and imperious manner, and with an intention to expose and deride, such deserve no answer; for pearls are not to be cast before swine, nor what is holy to be given to dogs; and with respect to him that gives the reason, which should be done with the fear of God, and with a view to his glory, and not to display a man's own gifts and knowledge. Likewise it is of use in restoring backsliders, who are to be used in a spirit of meekness, gently and tenderly (Gal. 6:1), and so in instructing such who oppose the gospel, and contradict themselves (2 Tim. 2:24, 25). Also it may be made use of in a man's conversation to great advantage, and recommend him, and the religion he professes, unto others (Jam. 3:13), not in a way of pride and boasting, but with humility and lowliness of mind; see (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

Fourthly, The arguments, reasons, and motives, encouraging to such a disposition of mind.

1. The displeasure of God at a contrary behavior and conduct; "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud," (1 Pet. 5:5) he sets himself against them, and it is a dreadful thing to have God an opponent; there is no standing against him and contending with him; of all men the proud are an abomination to him, these are a smoke in his nose; those who exalt themselves and despise others are sure to be abused; he scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts, confounds their schemes, and brings them themselves to destruction.

2. God gives more grace to the humble; for that is the meaning of the phrase, "He giveth grace unto the lowly," (Prov. 3:34) which is referred to in (1 Pet. 5:5), and so explained in (Jam. 4:6), that is, more grace; for a man must first have grace ere he can be

humble, or to make him humble; and then move grace is promised and given to him as such.

3. The Lord dwells with humble persons; they are a fit and proper habitation for God (Isa. 57:15; see Isa. 66:1, 2).

4. When such are disconsolate and sorrowful, the Lord comforts them, and fills them with joy and gladness; for this end the gospel is preached, and was preached by Christ himself, to be "good tidings to the meek;" and when these are cast down, through the prevalence of sin, the force of temptation, and divine desertions, whereby they are humbled, the Lord raises them up again; "the Lord lifteth up the meek," (Ps. 147:6) and there is a gracious promise, that "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord" (Isa. 29:19).

5. When they are hungry and in want of food the Lord feeds them to satisfaction; "the meek shall eat and be satisfied," (Ps. 22:26) yea, when they are in distress God will work miracles for them, rather than they shall want (Isa. 41:17-19).

6. When they want direction and instruction, he will guide and teach them; "the meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way," (Ps. 25:9) guide them into all truth as it is in Jesus; and teach them the ways and methods of his grace towards them; and the ways of duty, in which he would have them to walk.

7. Humility is the way to preferment, to honour, grandeur, and happiness; "before honour is humility; yea, by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life," (Prov. 16:18; 18:12; 22:4) and this is God's usual way, to abase those that exalt themselves, and to exalt them that are humble (Luke 18:14).

8. An inheritance is promised to the meek and humble; "the meek shall inherit the earth," (Ps. 37:11) the same is promised by Christ (Matthew 5:5), not the present earth, and the things of it; though good men have the promise of the life that now is, and are heirs of the world, and the world is theirs; but the new earth, in which none but righteous men will dwell with Christ a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:13).

9. Such are and shall be saved; "and he (God) shall save the humble person," both temporally and eternally (Job 22:29), he saves such in time, in a time of temporal judgments on the earth, God then arises to save all the meek of the earth; and when Christ comes to judgment with righteousness, he will judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth (Ps. 76:9; Isa. 11:4), and he will save them eternally; for they are the same with "the poor in spirit," whose is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

---

[40] Ep. 90.

[41] Deut. Natura Deorum, l. 3. prope finem.

Chapter 15

OF SELF-DENIAL

Self-denial accompanies humility; where the one is the other is; a self-denying man is an humble man, and an humble man is a self-denying man. "Proud, boasters, are lovers of their own selves," and cannot by any means deny themselves; but the meek and humble, the followers of the lowly Jesus, "deny themselves," and go after him; "If any man will come after me," says Christ, that is, be a disciple of his, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24), this is one of the hardest lessons to be learnt in the school of Christ, by his disciples; and no man can be a disciple of Christ without learning it.

1. It will be proper to inquire what self-denial is, or what it is for a man to deny himself.

1. It is not to deny what a man is or has; what he truly is, and what he really has; for that would be a falsehood; in this sense "God cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13), not his nature, and the perfections of it; or do, or affirm anything contrary thereunto. So a man ought not to deny himself as a man, nor the rational powers which he is possessed of; one may indeed, speaking in the language of another, and as expressing the meanness and contempt in which he is held by such, say, "I am a worm, and no man," as David the type, and Christ his antitype, did; a man may also, in a comparative sense, with respect to others, and as exaggerating his own folly, ignorance, and stupidity, say, as Asaph did, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast;" or was a very beast, "before thee," in thy sight, or could not be otherwise reckoned of by thee: and so Agur; "Surely, I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding

of a man," in comparison of others, and having a very low share of it, in his own opinion (Ps. 73:22; Prov. 30:2), in these senses such phrases may be admitted; otherwise it would not be true of a man, nor doing justice to himself, to say that he was no other than "a horse and a mule, which have no understanding." Nor should a man deny what he has of the external benefits and blessings of providence; if God bestows riches and honour upon a man, as he did on David, he should own them as coming to him from God, as David did, and bless God for such benefits, and make use of them for the glory of God, and the good of his interest; and if God has bestowed internal endowments on men, gifts and talents, qualifying for public service and usefulness, some way or another, they are to own them, and use them, and not wrap them up in a napkin, or hide them in the earth, which is interpretatively to deny that they have them. Nor should a truly good and gracious man deny what he is and has; but acknowledge it, and how by grace he came by it; and say with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" if a man is a believer in Christ he should confess his faith in him (Rom. 10:10), there were some among the Jews, in the times of Christ, who believed he was the Messiah, and yet confessed him not; because they "loved the praise of men," were lovers of themselves, and could not deny themselves of praise from men; yet such non-confession of Christ is tacitly a denial of him, and is so interpreted by Christ (Matthew 10:31, 32), but especially when a man has true faith in Christ, has spiritual knowledge of him, and is a real disciple of his, to deny this is very criminal; this was the sin of Peter, when challenged with being acquainted with Jesus, and being a disciple of his, denied that he knew him, and that he was one of them that belonged to him. And so if a man has faith in Christ, and good hope through grace, and the grace of God has been exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ, he ought to be very careful that he does not deny these things. There is in some weaker Christians, I do not know well what name to call it by, it is an over modesty, a thinking and speaking over meanly of themselves; and which they affect to do, and carry things to too great a length very much this way, as if they had no faith, nor love, and scarce any hope; and are ready to express themselves in such sort as seems to border, at least, upon a denial of the work of grace upon their souls; and is like a tearing up by the roots, as much as in them lies, the very principles of grace in them; which should never be encouraged, but discountenanced; the least measure of grace should be owned, and men should be thankful for it, and pray for an increase of it.

2. To deny a man's self is not to refuse favours conferred on him in a course of providence; nor to neglect a lawful use of them; nor to take no care of himself and of his affairs.

(1). Self-denial does not require that a man should refuse temporal honours and riches bestowed on him in a providential way; so Joseph, though a self-denying man, did not refuse the honours, and the tokens of them, Pharaoh gave him, when he made him ruler over the land of Egypt; nor David, when the tribes made him king over all Israel; nor Daniel, when he was advanced in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and was honoured by Belshazzar, and prospered in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus; but these good men improved them all to the glory of God and the good of others.

(2). Nor are the creatures of God, and the use of them, to be rejected; "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused" (1 Tim. 4:4), nor ought a man to debar himself of the free and lawful use of them; we are told there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy the fruit of his labour, and that it is his portion, and the gift of God; and that to withhold it from himself is a sore evil under the sun, vanity, and an evil disease (Eccl. 2:24; 5:19; 6:1, 2), only care should be taken in using the world, and worldly things, that they are not abused (1 Cor. 7:31), this is all with respect to worldly things that self-denial requires; even a non-gratification of the carnal and sensual appetite to excess; which branch of self-denial the wise man expresses by "putting a knife to the throat;" (see Prov. 23:2).

(3). Nor should a man be careless of his life, and health, and family, though he should not be anxiously careful for life, for food, and raiment to support and secure it; yet he may be lawfully careful for life, which is better than them; and so likewise for his health, to preserve it by proper means; as the apostle Paul advised the mariners with him, to take meat for their health's sake; and Timothy to the use of wine for his often infirmities (Acts 27:33, 34; 1 Tim. 5:23), and in like manner a man should be careful for his family;

which should he not, it would be so far from being reckoned self-denial, in a good sense, that it might be justly treated as a denial of the faith (1 Tim. 5:8).

(4). There is a self-love which is not criminal, nor contrary to the grace of self-denial; "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. 5:29), himself, which he is not obliged to by, yea, would be contrary to, the law of nature, and the law of God; to take care of a man's self, and to preserve his life, is the first principle and law of nature; [42] and it is commanded by the law of God, that a man should love himself; for according to that, he is to "love his neighbour as himself," and therefore must first love himself to love his neighbour as himself; there is a philautia, an inordinate love of a man's self, which is the source of all sin, of covetousness, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, ingratitude, &c. which is carefully to be avoided (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

(5). Nor is it self-denial, or any part of it, to abuse the body in any respect, and even on religious accounts, by cutting it with knives and lances, as Baal's priests; or by lashing it with whips and scourges, as the papists for penance; or by severe fastings and abstinence, "by neglecting it, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh," as some ancient heretics in the apostle's days (Col. 2:23), nor should any thing be done that endangers life, and much less should any, under whatsoever pretence, lay violent hands on themselves, to which sometimes the temptations of Satan lead (Matthew 4:6). But,

3. Self-denial lies in a man's renouncing, foregoing, and postponing all his pleasures, profits, relations, interest, and whatever he enjoys, which may be in competition with Christ from love to him, and to be given up at his command; a self-denying man seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and leaves all other things with God, to bestow upon him as he thinks fit; and what he has given him he is ready to give back again when called for, preferring Christ to all things in heaven and earth; he is ready at command to bring all he has, and lay it at his feet; as the first Christians brought all they had and laid at the feet of the apostles. This is self-denial. The common distribution of it is not amiss, into natural or civil self, sinful self, and righteous self; all which a self-denying Christian is made willing to part with.

First, with natural and civil self, with things relative both to soul and body, of which a man's self consists.

1. The soul, with its powers and faculties of understanding, will, and affections; and there are self-denying acts, which respect each of these.

(1). The understanding; and it is a self-denying act in a man, "to lean not to his own understanding," which is natural to him; but give it up to God, to be instructed, guided, and directed by him in all religious matters, according to his word, and the influenced of his grace and Spirit; thus Saul, when called by grace, "conferred not with flesh and blood," with the carnal reasonings of his mind, whether he should profess and preach Christ the Son of God, or not; but immediately set about it, following the divine light and supernatural instructions given him: and this is the case of all self denying Christians, when their reason is brought to stoop to divine revelation; and their carnal reasonings, and vain imaginations, and their high towering and exalted thoughts of themselves, and of their own understandings, are cast down, and brought into the obedience of Christ.

(2). The will; and then does a man deny himself, when his will becomes subject to the will of God; when, with good old Eli, he says, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," though ever so disagreeable to himself, and the interests of his family; and so the friends of the apostle Paul, when they were so desirous of his continuance, and found that all entreaties prevailed not, said, "The will of the Lord be done!" and when in all cases, the will of a man is brought to this, then may he be said to deny himself, of which Christ is a pattern to him; "Not my will, but thine be done!" (see 1 Sam. 3:18; Acts 21:14; Luke 22:42).

(3). The affections; these are sometimes called "inordinate affections" (Col. 3:5), as when they are out of due course and order; when the world, and the things of it, are loved with an immoderate love, in a manner inconsistent with the love of God, and when friends and relations are loved more than Christ; now self-denial checks and restrains the affections, and reduces them to proper order, and forbids such a love of the world, and the things of it; and will not suffer a man to love father or mother, son or daughter, more than Christ; but will declare such unworthy of him (1 John 2:15; Matthew 10:37).

2. The body, and its members, and things relative to that, and all external things: about these self-denial is exercised; as,

(1). When the members of the body are restrained from the service of sin; when "sin" is not "suffered to reign in the mortal body," and the "members" thereof are not "yielded as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but the deeds of it are mortified, and no provision is made for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12, 13; 8:13; 13:14).

(2). When external honours from men are not sought for, only the honour which comes from God; when a man is content to suffer the loss of fame, name, and credit among men for Christ's sake; to be defamed, made the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; to pass through honour and dishonor, good report and bad report, and suffer all indignities for the sake of religion. This is self-denial; an instance of this we have in Moses, who for forty years lived in the court of Pharaoh, and enjoyed the honours, pleasures, and riches of that court; yet denied himself of them all, chose to visit and rank himself among his brethren the Israelites, then in a low and despicable condition, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, and reproach for Christ's sake, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the riches of Egypt (Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:25, 26).

(3). When worldly profits and emoluments are left for the sake of Christ, and the interest of religion; this is self-denial: as when the disciples, one and another of them, left their fishing nets and boats, and worldly employments, and followed Christ; yea, Peter, in the name of them all, could say, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee" (Matthew 4:20, 22; 19:27). So Matthew, at the receipt of custom, which, perhaps, was a lucrative and profitable employment; yet, called by Christ, left it and followed him; (Matthew 9:9). And so many a gospel minister has given up himself to the ministry of the word, when worldly offers and views have directed him another way; and many private Christians have joyfully suffered the confiscation of goods, and even imprisonment of the body, for the sake of religion and a good conscience; this is self-denial. An instance to the contrary of all this we have in a young man, who could not part with his worldly substance and follow Christ, of whom he asked, what good thing he must do to have eternal life? and was answered, "Keep the commandments;" these he thought an easy task, and what he had been always used to, and seemed highly delighted with it; "All these things I have kept from my youth; what lack I yet?" a hard lesson is then set him to learn; "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor;" and though he was promised treasure in heaven, it did not countervail; "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions," which he could not part with and deny himself of (Matthew 19:16-22).

(4). The nearest and dearest friends and relations, which are a part of a man's self, these are to be left, when God calls for it; so Abraham was commanded to come out from his country and kindred, and his father's house, which, though a self-denying order, he was obedient to; and so the people of God, when called by grace, are directed to forsake their own people, and their father's house and when these attempt to obstruct them in the ways of God, they are not to be obeyed, but resisted; yea, even to be "hated," comparatively, that is, less love and respect are to be shown them than to Christ (Luke 14:26), a great instance of self-denial of this kind we have in Abraham, who was called to part with his son, his only son, his beloved son, the son of the promise, from whom the Messiah was to spring, to offer him upon a mount he should be shown; this was a great trial of faith, an hard lesson of self-denial to learn, and yet he withheld not his son from God; by which he gave evidence of a self-denying spirit, of his love to God, his fear of him, and obedience to his command.

(5). Health and hazard of life; as when men risk their health in the service of God and Christ, and true religion; so Epaphroditus, for the work of Christ was nigh unto death; and many, like the apostle Paul, have spent and been spent in the cause of God, by hard studies and frequent ministrations; so Paul and Barnabas hazarded their lives, through the rage of men, for the name of our Lord Jesus, preaching the gospel; and Aquila and Priscilla were ready to lay down their own necks for the apostle, that is, to risk their lives for his sake.

(6). Life itself is to be laid down when called for; the apostle Paul did not count his life dear to himself, but was ready to part with it for the sake of the gospel: and of others we read, that they loved not their lives

unto death; and this is the great instance of self-denial Christ gives (Matthew 16:24, 25).

Secondly, another branch of self-denial lies in denying sinful self; this lesson, not nature, but grace teaches, even to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," which include all kinds of sin; internal lusts and external actions of sin; sins of heart, lip, and life; everything that is contrary to God and his righteous law. This is a hard lesson to learn; to part with sinful self is not an easy task, sin is so natural to men, they are conceived and born in it, are transgressors from the womb, and have lived in sin from their youth upward; sin and the soul have been long companions, and are loath to part; sin is as natural to the sinner as blackness to the Ethiopian, and spots to the leopard; it is as grateful to him as cold water to a thirsty soul; and is like a sweet morsel in his mouth, and he hides and spares it, and cares not to forsake it; it promises him much pleasure, though short lived, vain, and fallacious; some sins are right hand and right eye sins, as dear as the right hand and right eye be; and to cut off and pluck out such and cast them away is a great piece of self-denial; and is hard work, until the Spirit of God thoroughly convinces a man of the exceeding sinfulness or sin, what an evil and bitter thing it is, and how pernicious in its effects and consequences; and then being called and required to forsake it, does, and says with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" and this self-denial appears by loathing it and themselves for it; by detesting and abhorring it, and themselves on account of it; and by repenting of it in deep humiliation for it, by lamenting the indwelling and prevalence of it, and by praying against it; by abstaining from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and from all appearance of sin; by making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it; by opposing them, resisting unto blood, striving against sin; and by declaring to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: so persons and things are said to be denied, when there is an aversion to them, a rejection of them, a disowning them as belonging to them, and as having any connection with them; so Moses was denied by the Israelites, and Christ by the Jews (Acts 3:14; 7:35). A branch of this part of self-denial lies in parting with sinful companions, which are a sort of second self; and especially sinful relations, whom to part with is difficult work, as to withstand their solicitations, earnest entreaties, enticing language, and fair promises of pleasure and profit; as also to bear their reproaches, revilings, and censures, on refusing to associate with them; for "he that departs from evil maketh himself a prey" (Isa. 59:15), but being called by divine grace to come out from among them, and to be separate from them; and being convinced of the folly and danger of keeping company with them, and having better companions, and more preferable communion and fellowship, they are called into; and having had too long an abode with them to their great grief and loss, determine through the grace of God to leave them, and to have nothing more to do with them; which is self-denial.

Thirdly, another branch of self-denial is to deny righteous self, which is not to refuse to do works of righteousness for necessary uses, to glorify God, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and a profession of it; to show the genuineness and truth of faith, and to do good to others; this the grace of God teaches and obliges unto: but to deny righteous self, is to renounce all trust in and dependence on a man's own righteousness for justification before God, and acceptance with him; and to submit to the righteousness of Christ, and depend upon that for such purposes. Now this is a hard lesson to learn, for a man to quit all trust in himself that he is righteous, and to depend upon the righteousness of another; to live out of himself upon another; to be beholden entirely to the free grace of God, and to the righteousness of Christ, disclaiming all works done by himself for his justification and whole salvation, is disagreeable to self: it is against the grain; a man's righteousness is his own, and he does not care to part with it, he would fain hold it fast; it is the effect of great toil and labour, and which he has endeavoured to establish and settle fast, and to have it all pulled down at once he cannot bear it; it is matter of glorying and boasting, and to have this excluded, and to be stripped of all his feathers, is not pleasing to flesh and blood; it is his idol he has bowed unto, and to take this away from him is as cutting as it was to Micah, when his images were stolen from him, and he said, "Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?" but when the Spirit of God convinces a man of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to justify him before God, and of the excellency of the righteousness of Christ for

such a purpose, then he quits his own, and lays hold on that; an instance of this kind of self-denial we have in the apostle Paul, who was at first a self-righteous man, who thought that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless; he counted it gain unto him, and trusted in it, and expected to be justified and saved by it; but when be came to see the imperfection of it, and was convinced of its unprofitableness to God, he counted it loss and dung, and rejected it as such, desiring to be "found in Christ," and in his righteousness, and not his own (Phil. 2:6-9).

II. There are various arguments or motives, which may be made use of to excite truly gracious souls to the exercise of this grace of self-denial in the several branches of it.

1. It is required of them; it is an injunction of Christ on his disciples, even all of them, and therefore to be strictly regarded, complied with, and exercised; "If any man wilt come after me," is desirous of being a disciple and follower of Christ, "let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24), nay, this is necessary to a man's being a disciple of Christ, he cannot be one without it; see (Luke 14:26, 21).

2. Christ has not only commanded it, but he has set an example of it himself; he denied himself for our sakes; came forth from his Father, and came down from heaven to serve us; though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich; though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he so far humbled and denied himself as to be found in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross; he pleased not himself, but patiently bore the reproaches of men, which could not but be very disagreeable to him; and he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; anti in all which and more he was an example of self-denial (Phil. 2:5-8).

3. The examples of saints in all ages may serve to excite and encourage to it; as of Abraham, in leaving his country and father's house, and especially in offering up his son at the command of God; in Moses, refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; in the Old Testament saints and martyrs, who suffered bonds, imprisonment, trial of cruel mockings, and death itself, in various shapes; and so in others since: in the apostles of Christ, who left all and followed him; an instance of denial of sinful self may be observed in Zacchaeus and others; and of righteous self in the apostle Paul.

4. If a man does not deny himself, as required of God, he sets up himself for god, makes a god of himself, and is guilty of idolatry; such live to themselves, and not unto God and Christ, which the love of Christ constrains unto; namely, that they who live, should not live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again; yea, that they should none of them neither live to themselves, nor die to themselves, but to the Lord; that both living and dying they may appear to be his, and not their own (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Rom. 14:7, 8).

5. The loss and gain of not denying and of denying self should be considered. Such who think to save themselves by not denying themselves, lose themselves and their own souls; lose Christ and his righteousness, heaven and eternal life; when those who deny themselves for Christ's sake, find the life of their souls, gain Christ and his righteousness, have treasure in heaven, the recompence of reward, the more enduring substance (Matthew 16:25, 26; Phil. 3:7, 8; Heb. 11:26, 27; 10:34).

---

[42] "Principio, generi animantium omni est a natura tributum, ut se, vitam corpusque tueatur, declinetque ea quae nocitura videantur." Cicero de Officiis, l. 1. c. 4.

Chapter 16

OF RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD

Submission, or resignation of the will of man to the will of God, is a part of self-denial, as has been observed in the preceding chapter, and therefore properly next requires a distinct consideration. It is no other than an entire acquiescence in the will of God in all things, and especially in adverse dispensations of providence, which is a trial of it; as in Eli, when he was told of the distresses that should come upon his family, said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!" (1 Sam. 3:18), and in much the same temper and disposition of mind was David, when he ordered the ark to be carried back to Jerusalem, which he was obliged to leave (2 Sam. 15:25, 26). This is no

other than for a man to have his will swallowed up in the will of God, and to have no will of his own, but what is the Lord's; or only to will what he wills, and is pleasing to him; this, in its highest perfection, was in Christ in the midst of his agonies; "Not my will, but thine be done!" Something of this kind may be expected from a follower of Christ; but that anything similar to it should drop from the lips of an heathen, is somewhat extraordinary; and yet Epictetus gives this advice, "Will nothing but what God wills;" [43] there is indeed a difference between giving advice and acting up to it, and between theory and practice; and yet this same heathen says, [44] "I yield my appetite to God; does he will that I should have a fever? I will it also. Does he will that I should attempt anything? I likewise will it. Would he have me desire anything? I also will it. Would he have me enjoy anything? the same is my will. Does he nill? I also nill. Would he have me die? I am willing to die." How far he said this with truth, and acted according to it, I will not say; but to have the will so resigned to the will of God, highly becomes a Christian. But,

First, there must be much done to the will of man, and much management of it, under the power of divine grace, to bring the will of man to be subject to the will of God. For,

1. The will of man is very stubborn and inflexible; we often read of the hardness of the heart, and of its being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and of the stony heart, a heart as hard as a stone, yea, as an adamant stone, on which no impressions can be made, nor becomes pliable and flexible by any methods made use of; and such is the obstinacy of the will of man.

2. It is averse to all that is good; it hates the good and loves the evil; it hates the good law of God, and is not subject to it; nor can it be, without the power of divine grace; it hates good men, and all their good instructions; as men to do good have no knowledge, so neither will they understand; they have no will nor desire to understand what is good, and still less to practice it.

3. The will of men is biased to, and bent upon that which is evil; their hearts are "fully set in them, to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11), their language is, "we will walk after our own devices," &c. (Jer. 18:12; 44:16, 17).

4. The will of man is opposite to the will of God in all things; yea, in things that are most for his good; even for his everlasting welfare and happiness. The will of God is, that men should be saved, or have everlasting life and salvation only by Christ; but the will of men is averse to this way of salvation; "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40), the will of God is, that men should be justified in his sight, not by the works of the law, but by the righteousness of Christ; but, on the contrary, so stouthearted, and far from this way of righteousness, are men, that they seek justification, not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law, and go about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousness of Christ. God has set up Christ as king over Zion, and requires obedience to his word and ordinances; but such is the perverseness of wills of men, that they declare, saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us;" and therefore break the bands, and cast away the cords of his laws and ordinances from them: and if they are so averse to the methods of his grace and kingdom, then much more so to the dispensation of his providence.

5. The carnal mind and will of man is "enmity" itself "against God," his law and gospel, his purposes and providences; it is full of rebellion to him; it rebels against the light of nature, and against the law of God; the Israelites were always a rebellious people, though favoured with the knowledge of the will of God above all people; and so the elect of God, while in a state of nature, are styled "rebellious" (Ps. 68:18).

6. It is one of the characters of sinful men, that they are "self-willed" (2 Pet. 2:10), men naturally desire to have their own wills and ways; they do not care to be contradicted and gainsayed; even God's elect, before conversion, are studiously "fulfilling the desires of the flesh," or the wills of the flesh, their carnal wills, and choose to live to the lusts of the flesh, and not to the will of God. In such a bad and depraved state is the will of man naturally; so that much must be done with it to bring it into subjection to the will of God.

Now the various steps which God takes, and the various things he does to the will of man, in order to work it up, and bring it to a submission to his will, are these:

1. He "breaks" the wills of men, he crosses them, by one afflictive providence after another, and brings them by degrees to give up their wills to his; he will

not let them have their own wills and ways; but thwarts them, and denies them those things their wills are set upon; until at length they are content that his will should be done; as creatures not used to a yoke, at first are very reluctant, and wriggle and toss about, and will not easily submit, until some rough methods are taken, to break them. Graceless men are sons of Belial, children without a yoke; such are the people of God before conversion; but then they are called to take a yoke upon them, not only of Christ's commands and ordinances, but of afflictions and reproaches for Christ's sake; when they are, at first, like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," and it sits uneasy upon them; but afterwards, when they are more used to it, they become more patient and quiet under it; hence it is said to be "good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;" for thereby he is inured to it, and bears it more quietly and patiently (Lam. 3:27), it not being perceived so heavy as at first. [45]

2. The Lord exerts his mighty power upon the wills of men, and of unwilling makes them willing; when the power of God is put forth upon them, then they are made willing, as to serve the Lord, and to be saved by him in his own way; so to part with everything he calls for, and to bear and suffer whatever is his will and pleasure; but such a willing disposition is not by "might and power" of men; a man cannot make himself willing, or work himself to such a submissive frame; but it is effected by the Spirit of God, and the power of his efficacious grace; and this is not done by force and compulsion: God does not force the will, but allures and attracts it; works upon it, as Austin says, with an omnipotent sweetness, and a sweet omnipotence.

3. The Lord takes away the obduracy and hardness, the stubbornness and stiffness of the will, and makes it flexible to his will; he takes away the stony heart, and gives an heart of flesh, a soft heart, susceptible of impressions, by which it may be wrought upon to a compliance to the will of God; this he sometimes does by his word, which is as an hammer to break the rock in pieces; and sometimes by afflictive providences, by which God sometimes makes "the heart soft," as he did Job's; though perhaps he may mean it in a somewhat different sense (Job 23:16), men, in a state of nature, their "neck is an iron sinew," or the sinew of their neck is like a bar of iron, which will not bend; but such a bar, when put into the fire, and made soft, it may be bent at pleasure; so men, called by grace, and put into the furnace of affliction, they become soft and pliable to the will of God.

4. The will of man is made free by the power of divine grace in conversion, which before was a slave [46] to sin and Satan, and brought into bondage; and while it so continues it is not, and cannot be obedient to the will of God; while it is a servant to various lusts and pleasures, it cannot willingly submit to adverse dispensations of providence; but "if the Son makes it free, it is free" indeed, to take up the cross and follow him; when men are "made free from sin," from the dominion, bondage, and slavery of it, they become "the servants of righteousness, and servants to God," and submissive to his will, both to do and suffer whatever is his pleasure to call them to.

5. God effectually works in his people, "both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" he does not create a new faculty of the will, but he frees it from what hinders its operations in a right way, and influences it by his grace to act according to his own will and pleasure; when to "will is present" with them, though sometimes they find want of power to perform as they would; the "spirit is willing," both to do and suffer what is the will of God; "but the flesh is weak," and has not strength to act, but throws clogs and difficulties in the way; however, the will is so powerfully wrought upon as to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" I am willing to do anything, and bear anything, thou art pleased to call me to (Acts 9:6). So submissive is the will under a divine influence. I proceed to consider,

Secondly, the various phrases by which submission to the will of God, especially under adverse dispensations of providence, is expressed.

1. To be "still," and quiet and easy; "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10), which is directed to amidst the commotions, stirs, and tumults, in the world, and the desolations made in the earth, as the context shows; and is to be understood.

(1). Not of insensibility and stupidity; that men should be as "still as a stone," or be like stocks and stones, senseless and unconcerned; they should be sensible of the hand of God in his providences, and own it as directed to in the exhortation, "Know that I am God;" own and acknowledge my hand in all these things; so Eli said, "It is the Lord, let him do

what seemeth him good!" and so Job; "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away!" they should be sensible of the cause of these things; for, as David said, "Is there not a cause?" There and that is sin; "If his children forsake my law, &c. then will I visit their transgressions with a rod": and they should be sensible of the affliction itself; not only feel the rod, but bear it, take notice of it, and learn by it; indeed, sometimes so stupid are men, that "God speaketh once, yea twice," by an afflictive providence, one after another, "yet man perceiveth it not," takes no notice of it; it has no effect upon him; though he is "stricken" and "beaten," he "feels" it not: there are two extremes often in men under the afflicting hand of God; either they are apt to faint, and sink under an affliction, or to neglect it, overlook it, oligorei, make little or nothing of it; both which are guarded against in the exhortation in (Heb. 12:5). Nor,

(2). Of a stoical apathy is the phrase to be understood; as if a man should be quite unaffected with an afflictive providence; though the affections are to be checked, when they become inordinate, yet there may be a due use of them; they are not indeed to be set on earth, and earthly things, but upon things in heaven; and such a disposition of them will make a man more quiet and easy under the loss of things temporal; yet he is not wholly divested of his affections under such losses; when Job lost all his substance, as well as his children, and was all submission to the will of God, yet he gave manifest tokens of his affections being moved by the providence; as by rending his mantle, shaving his head, and falling down upon the ground: and though Christians are not to sorrow for the loss of relations and friends, as the heathens, without hope, and in that immoderate and barbarous manner they did, yet may with moderation; Abraham went to Hebron to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her, when dead; and Joseph made a mourning for his father seven days; devout men carried Stephen to his grave, and made great lamentation over him; and Christ himself wept over the grave of Lazarus.

(3). Nor is the phrase expressive of inactivity. The strength of men in such cases is not to "sit still" and do nothing; there is much to be done under afflictive providences; as various graces to be exercised; when men are chastened by the Lord, they are called upon to be "zealous" and "repent;" and they have need of faith and confidence in the divine promises to support them, which should not be cast away, but exercised; and of patience, that when they have done the will of God by suffering afflictions, they may receive the promises. And there are duties to be performed, as both prayer and praise; "If any be afflicted, let him pray," for support under the affliction, and that it may be sanctified to him, and he may be delivered from it in due time: and praise too, so Job blessed the Lord when he was stripped of all he had; the cross is to be taken up, in which saints are active, and bear it patiently, and through many tribulations follow Christ, and enter into the kingdom. But,

(4). It is opposed to the fretting of the mind at the prosperity of others, and at their own adversity; which is dehorted from, "fret not thyself" (Ps. 37:1, 7, 8), and to all impatience, restlessness, and disquietude, under the hand of God; a good man should not act like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and much less like a wild bull in a net; but the phrase signifies, composure of mind, sedateness, a quiet submission to the will of God, and patience under his mighty hand.

2. Submission to the will of God, is expressed by a man's holding his peace, and being dumb and silent; thus Aaron, when he lost his two sons in an awful manner, by fire from heaven; it is said, "And Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:2), said not one word against what was done, or as complaining of the providence: so David was dumb when under a sore affliction (Ps. 39:9), and of a good man under the yoke of affliction it is said, "He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence" (Lam. 3:28). Now,

(1). All this is to be understood, not as though there was nothing to be said under an afflictive providence; for it should be owned that it is of God, that it is of his appointing, in his secret purposes and decrees; "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14). Job is there speaking chiefly of his afflictions, and has respect to them; and as they are appointed in God's purposes, they are brought on by his over ruling providence; there is "no evil," of such a kind, in a city, but the Lord has done it; he makes peace, and "creates evil;" adversity and prosperity are from him, and he sets the one against the other. It should also be acknowledged by the saints, that they are deserving of such afflictions; "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" it may be

expected. Nor should the people of God be silent in prayer under such providences; God expects to hear from them then; "In their affliction they will seek me early," for, help, support, and deliverance. Nor should they be silent in praise to God, but bless his name; since it might have been worse with them than it is; especially when they are taught of God under their afflictions, and by them, and when they evidently see that they work together for their good; and they should not fail to speak to others of the goodness of God to them; of gracious experiences in their afflictions, how that everlasting arms are underneath them, their bed is made in their sickness, God is with them when they pass through the fire and through the waters, and he chooses them in the furnace of affliction. But,

(2). Such silence is opposed to murmuring against God, and complaining of his providence, as the Israelites in the wilderness did; and to charging his ways with inequality, as the Jews in the times of Ezekiel: but it denotes such behavior as Job's under such providences, who sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:22).

3. Submission to the will of God is expressed by "hearing the rod, and him who has appointed it" (Micah 6:9), by the rod is meant the rod of correction, with which God, as a Father, scourges and chastises his children, called the "rod of God," because of his appointing, and which he makes use of in a fatherly way; and the rod of man, because it is no other than what is common to men, and is used in a kind and tender way, after the manner of men. In which rod there is the voice of the Lord, which cries unto men in a way of reproof for sin, and by commanding them to return from iniquity; which calls for humiliation, and instructs in the way of duty; and then it is heard and hearkened to, when men are obedient and submit to the will of God, signified by it; when their ears are opened to discipline, and they attend to it, and instruction is sealed unto them, and they are impressed by it.

4. The same is signified by men "humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God," according to the exhortation in (1 Pet. 5:6), by the hand of God is meant his correcting and chastising hand, which sometimes is heavy, and presses sore; and which Job felt, and therefore cried to his friends to have pity on him, because the hand of the Lord was upon him; and "strong is his hand, and high is his right hand;" and which, though it is laid on in mercy, yet sometimes is very heavy and distressing: and the end and use of it is to humble men; as all the Lord's dealings with the Israelites in the wilderness were to humble them, and to prove them; so are all the Lord's dispensations of providence towards his people, to hide pride from them, and to bring them to his feet, and to own his sovereignty over them; and this is the way to be exalted. In short, all these phrases are expressive of submission to the will of God; the language of them is, "The will of the Lord be done!" (Acts 21:14), and, indeed, this should be submitted to in all things; and it should be the constant language of the saints, with respect to everything in which they are concerned; "If the Lord will, we shall live and do this and that" (Jam. 4:15; see 1Co 4:19). It is a phrase often used by Socrates, as may be seen in the writings of Plato, ean theos ethele, "If God will;" [47] and which well becomes the mouth of a Christian at all times, who ought to be all submission to God, and to be wholly absorbed in the will of God; for which,

Thirdly, the following reasons may be given among many.

First, whatever is done in providence is done by the Lord; his will and his hand are in it; and this should reconcile the will of man to it, be it what it may; so said Eli, "It is the Lord," who has said it and will do it, "let him do what seemeth him good!" it was the consideration of this, that the Lord was concerned in all Job's losses, that it was he who gave and took away, which made them sit so easy on his mind; and even to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" and this is what makes and keeps quiet and still, under the most afflictive providences, to know that it is the Lord who wills them. As,

1. That he is a sovereign Being, who does according to his will in heaven and in earth, who has the disposal of the whole world, and of all creatures and things in it; he has a sovereign right to all, and may do what he will with his own; give and take away at pleasure; and therefore to be submitted to.

2. That he is immutable, and his will is irresistible; his mind is invariable, and his purpose unalterable; "Who shall disannul it?" make it void and of none effect: "And his hand is stretched out" in providence, to execute his purpose, "and who shall turn it back?" as it would be impious, so in vain to attempt it; for

"who hath resisted his will?" his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; and therefore his will is to be submitted to (Job 23:13; Isa.. 14:27).

3. He is not accountable to his creatures; nor is it fitting and reasonable that he should; they are accountable to him, but not he to them; therefore "he giveth no account of his matters" (Job 32:13), as none can "stay his hand" or stop the course of his providence; so none ought to "say to him, What doest thou?" but a silent submission should be yielded to him.

4. That he is the wise, and the only wise God, and does all his works in wisdom; though he does all things according to his will, in a sovereign way, yet, "after the counsel of his own will;" in the best and wisest manner, as such things are usually done, when done with consultation; as all his works in nature and in grace are made in wisdom, so his works of providence, in which there is a "bathos," "a depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." What is said of Christ with respect to his miracles, "He hath done all things well," is true of God in the dispensations of his providence, and therefore to be submitted to.

5. That he is holy and righteous in all his ways and works, and there is no unrighteousness in him; he cannot be charged with an unjust action, and with any inequality in his ways, and therefore not to be complained of in any respect.

6. That he is a faithful God, and it is in faithfulness he afflicts his people; and while they are under the affliction he will not suffer them to be tempted, or afflicted, above what they are able to bear; not will he take away his kindness from them, nor break his covenant with them; all which displays his faithfulness (Ps. 119:75; 89:33, 34; 1 Cor. 10:13).

7. That all his ways are mercy and love to his people; when he hides his face he loves, when he chides he loves, and when be chastises he loves; the rod is in a Father's hand, and should be submissively attended to.

Secondly, what is done by the Lord seems good to him; and what seems good to him must be good; "Let him do what seemeth him good": he is good originally and underivatively, the fountain of all goodness; there is nothing but goodness in him, and nothing else comes from him, or is done by him; "Thou art good, and doest good," says David (Ps. 119:68), all he did in creation was "very good," and all he does in providence is very good, even in the adverse dispensations of it: when Isaiah, from the Lord, told Hezekiah what evil should befall his posterity, he replied, "Good is of the Lord, which thou hast spoken" (Isa. 39:6-8). What God does, it is his pleasure to do, and he will do all his pleasure; he sits in the heavens, and does whatsoever he pleases; and what pleases him should please us. [48] It is said of David, "Whatsoever the king did pleased all the people" (2 Sam. 3:36). What the King of kings does should please all his people, all his saints, of whom he is King. It was a flattering speech of a courtier to king Astyages, "All is pleasing that the king does," [49] even when he had treated him in a shocking and barbarous manner: but without any flattery, and with a laudable submission of will to the will of God, every saint may say, whatever the Lord does is pleasing, is all well done; being for his own glory and the good of his people.

---

[43] meden allo thele, e a o theos thele, Arrian. Epictet. l. 2. c. 17.

[44] Ib. l. 3. c. 26.

[45] "Magis urgent saeva inexpertos, grave est tenerae cervici jugum," Seneca de Providentia, c. 4.

[46] Luther wrote a book, "De servo arbitrio," of man's will a slave; in which he represents it as a beast of Satan, a captive to his will, which he rides on and guides as he pleases, c. 15. p. 65. c. 200. p. 305.

[47] Indeed this is often to be observed in the mouths of the vulgar; "What God wills must be: If it please God we shall do so and so." Everything is what pleases God should be. Hence Luther observes, there remains in vulgar minds no less knowledge of God's predestination and prescience than of Deity. De Servo Arbitrio, c. 20. p. 32.

[48] "Placeat homini, quidquid Deo placuit," Senecae Epist. 74.

[49] areston einai pan to an basileus erde, Herodot. Clio, Sive. l. 1. c. 119.

Chapter 17

OF PATIENCE

Without patience there can be no real self-denial, nor true submission to the will of God in adversity; nor contentment in every state; nor thankfulness for every mercy; it is what accompanies every grace, as faith, hope, and love; hence we read of "the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope," as together in the same persons, remembered by the apostle (1 Thess. 1:3), and to the exercise of every grace this of patience is to be added (2 Pet. 1:5, 6), and this, with other graces, is to be eagerly pursued, closely followed after, and constantly exercised (1 Tim. 6:11), it is so necessary in the things of God, that one a stranger to this grace, as Tertullian [50] observes, cannot undertake to perform any command, nor do any work that is acceptable to the Lord. Concerning which may be inquired,

First, in what it lies, or wherein is the exercise of it.

1. In patiently bearing afflictions, of whatsoever kind it pleases God to exercise with; hence the exhortation to "be patient in tribulation" (Rom. 12:12), afflictions are the lot of the children of God, who are described as a poor and afflicted people; these are what they are appointed unto, what Christ has given them reason to expect in this world, and of which all the children of God are partakers; for if without them, they are bastards, and not sons; and therefore should be patiently bore: every follower of Christ has a cross, his own peculiar cross; which he is to take up willingly and bear cheerfully; "Christianus est crucianus;" a Christian is a cross bearer, as Luther used to say; nor should we be impatient under it. Afflictions lie in the way to the heavenly glory, which is a "narrow way," tethlimmene odos, an afflicted way, strowed with afflictions; and through this rough way all Christian pilgrims and travelers pass, and enter the kingdom; so did Christ himself; and ere long they will come to the end of it, and out of great tribulations, and therefore should patiently endure them. They are no other than fatherly chastisements, given in love, and for good; and sooner or later apparently issue in good, either here or hereafter, and therefore to be yielded to with filial reverence and subjection; and though in themselves not joyous, but grievous; yet since peaceable fruits of righteousness follow them, those who are exercised with them, should be content to bear them. Now to the exercise of patience under afflictions, murmurings, and repinings at them, and complainings of them, are opposite. Nor should saints be in haste to be rid of them, but wait the Lord's time; nor make use of any unlawful methods to get out of them; but should be willing they should take their course, and should let patience have its perfect work.

2. The exercise of patience lies in bearing reproach and persecution for the sake of Christ and his gospel; they that will live godly in Christ must expect these things; they are not to be thought new and strange, as if they were never before known or heard of; nor should saints he impatient under them. Moses esteemed reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; and the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ; yea more than this, the followers of Christ have been called unto in all ages, especially in the first ages of Christianity, under Rome pagan, and since under Rome papal, even to endure the most cruel persecutions and severe deaths; after an account of which this observation is made, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints;" that is, the trial of their patience and faith; and we are not yet out of antichristian times; the reign of antichrist is not yet at an end: and whatsoever saints are called to suffer for the sake of Christ, is cheerfully to be submitted to and patiently endured; nor should they desert their station, nor withdraw themselves from their duty, nor drop their profession, nor forsake the fellowship of the saints, and be like the stony ground hearer, who by and by is offended, withdraws himself, and is gone.

3. Patience is tried and exercised in and by the temptations of Satan; our Lord suffered much himself, being tempted; and with what patience did he endure his sufferings by them, repelling every temptation only by saying, "It is written" so and so; though at the last temptation, and which was the most insolent and audacious, he added, "Get thee hence, Satan." Saints have reason to bear them all patiently; since Christ their High Priest not only sympathizes with them, but helps them when tempted, and prays for them, that their faith fail not; and still the more, since he assures them his grace is sufficient for them, to bear them up under temptations, and carry through them, and that his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness, to deliver out of them.

4. Patience is exercised by divine desertions,

and lies in quietly waiting for the Lord's gracious manifestations of himself unto his people again. Sometimes they are impatient on this account, and inquire the reason of it, and say, "Why hidest thou thyself?" and complain of the length of time, and ask, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" (Ps. 10:1; 13:1), thinking the time of desertion so long as to be a sort of eternity; and, indeed, unbelief sometimes suggests, that God has cast off for ever, and will be favourable no more; but at other times we find the saints more patient, and in more quiet and waiting postures; as the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 8:17), and more especially the church, under the hidings of God's face (Micah 7:7-10).

5. Patience is exercised when answers of prayer are deferred, and it lies in a quiet waiting for them. Sometimes the Lord's people are very uneasy and impatient because they are not immediately answered, and imagine that God has covered himself with a cloud, that their prayer cannot pass through; or that he has turned a deaf ear to them, and will never regard them; though the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore should be waited for till that time comes, when it will not tarry; and so it has been found by experience; as by David (Ps. 40:1, 2).

6. This grace appears and shows itself in a patient waiting for the heavenly glory; sometimes the saints are impatient, and want to depart, and be in the enjoyment of it before God's time, because of the afflictions, trials, and exercises they meet with in life; which does not become them; instances of which were Elijah, Job, Jonah, and others: but afflictions are to be endured patiently, in expectation of glory; since it is but a short time they will last; a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and therefore they have need of, and should exercise patience in doing the will of God, that they may receive the promises; and should consider that their afflictions are but for a moment, as well as light, when compared with the eternal weight of glory that will shortly follow; and therefore should hope and quietly wait for it (Rom. 8:25). I shall next consider,

Secondly, the causes of this grace, and from whence it comes.

1. The efficient cause is God, from whom every good and perfect gift comes; and as this is a gift, as every grace is, and a good one in its nature, use, and consequences; and is a perfect one, when it has its perfect work and effect, it must come from God; and hence he is called, "The God of patience," because he is the author of it, as well as requires it, and it is exercised towards him, by whom seems to be meant God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:5, 6). We read also of the "patience of Christ," and of being directed into it, as well as into the love of God (2 Thess. 3:5), and which may signify, not only the patience exercised by Christ in his human nature, amidst all his afflictions and sufferings; but what he works in the hearts of his people, and encourages them to exercise; for as he is the author and finisher of faith, so of patience; and the saints are companions of one another in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ: and even his patience as man is the exemplar and pattern of theirs; for he has left an example of it, that they may tread in his steps; and certain it is, that longsuffering, or patience, which is the same, is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), so that all the three Persons are concerned in it.

2. The instrumental causes of it are the scriptures, and word of God and Christ; which are written, "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope;" which, as they are the means of instruction and consolation, so of patience. The word of God encourages to it, furnishes with arguments for the exercise of it, and gives instances and examples of it, exciting thereunto; hence Christ calls it, the word of his patience; "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10), and this word, accompanied with a divine power, and received into a good heart, made so by the Spirit of God, "brings forth fruit with patience," and patience is one of its fruits (Luke 8:13).

3. Afflictions themselves are a means of increasing it, for afflictions try faith; and the "trying of faith works patience," and brings that into exercise, and inures unto it; yea, it is expressly said, that "tribulation works patience," that is, when sanctified; otherwise it produces impatience and murmurings (Jam. 1:3; Rom. 5:3). I proceed to observe,

Thirdly, the usefulness of this grace, and the exercise of it. As,

1. It makes a man comfortable and happy in himself; without this a man cannot enjoy himself, his mercies and his friends; hence the advice of Christ to his disciples, "In your patience possess ye your

souls" (Luke 21:19), an impatient man can have no enjoyment of himself, nor of anything he has; he is always restless and uneasy, and has no peace in himself; whereas a man possessed of patience, and in the exercise of it, has a peace which the world can, neither give nor take away, a peace in the midst of tribulation.

2. It is of great use in running the Christian race; "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1), by the race is meant the Christian's course of life in this world, and what still remains of it to be run out; the prize run for is the prize of the high calling, the heavenly glory, the crown of life, glory, and righteousness, laid up in heaven; this race is "set before us," the way is marked out in which we are to run; the rubs, the troubles, the impediments to be met with in the way are appointed; the mark to direct and steer the course by, and which is always to be had in view, is Christ, who is the hope set before us in the gospel; the length of the course to be run is fixed, the whole time of life, every year, month, day, and moment: and it requires patience to run it; partly through the length of the race, which sometimes appears tedious; and partly because of the troubles, difficulties, and discouragements in the way; and likewise because of the prize saints long to be in the enjoyment of.

3. There is need of it, and of its exercise, in "doing the will of God," in order to receive the promise (Heb. 10:36), by doing the will of God is not so much meant obeying the preceptive will of God, as to submit to the will of God respecting afflictions and sufferings for his sake; for it is given, and it is the will of God, not only that men should believe in Christ, and follow him, but that they should "suffer for his sake;" and to do this requires patience, and a quiet submission to the will of God; which is the way to be quiet, patient, and humble under his mighty hand, while suffering according to his will (1 Pet. 4:19), and so patience is necessary to receive the promise, the promised glory, after the will of God is done in a way of suffering; for the promise is made to him that endures patiently; "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, afflictions with patience; he shall receive the crown of life; obtain the promise, as Abraham did, and through faith and patience inherit it" (Jam. 1:12; Heb. 6:12, 15).

4. Another use of the grace of patience is, that when it has its perfect work, saints become perfect also (Jam. 1:4 this grace is imperfect, as all others are, faith, hope, love, knowledge, &c. and even in the best, and in such who have been most eminent for it, as Job particularly; and yet what impatience was he guilty of at times? though it may be increased, as every other grace; for as there is such a thing as growing in grace in general, so in any grace in particular, and in this also: when it is said, that "tribulation works patience," the meaning is, that it is the means and occasion [51] of increasing it. And it may be said to be perfect, when it appears to be sincere and genuine, as it does by its being tried by afflictions; and it has its "perfect work" when it is constant in its exercise, and continues to the end; and then will the saints be perfect, which they are not now in themselves, only in Christ their head; but when this grace, and every other, shall be perfect, then will they be perfect in holiness and happiness, as they will be at the resurrection in soul and body, and be entire, complete, and want nothing.

Fourthly, the motives or arguments exciting to the exercise of this grace, may next be considered,

1. It is what God calls his people to; as to suffer for well doing, so to take suffering for well doing patiently; "For even hereunto were ye called," that is, to take it patiently (1 Pet. 2:21), hence these frequent exhortations to it; "Be patient in tribulation; be patient towards all men; be patient, brethren;" and again, be ye also patient; and which is enforced and exemplified in the case of the husbandman, patiently waiting for the fruits of the earth, after much trouble, toil, and labour; see (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:14; Jam. 5:7, 8).

2. The exercise of this grace is taken notice of, approved of, and commended by God (1 Pet. 2:20), hence Christ, in his epistles to the churches, frequently observes, with commendation, their patience among other things; "I know thy patience" (Rev. 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10).

3. It is commendable in the sight of good men; Solomon extols it (Eccl. 7:8), and the apostle Paul glories in the Thessalonians for it (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4), a meek and patient Christian is not only in the sight of God of great price, but is very amiable in the sight of good men.

4. The patience of God exercised towards his people may be improved into an argument exciting

to it. The Lord is patient and longsuffering towards his people before conversion, while they are doing those things which might justly provoke the eyes of his glory; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, being by nature children of wrath, as others; yet he is patient, and bears long with them, waiting to be gracious to them, and to have mercy, on them (Isa. 30:18), and after conversion, he bears with their many provocations, backslidings, and revoltings from him; and, indeed, his patience with a wicked world, in not destroying it sooner, is for the sake of his chosen ones, waiting until they are called and brought to repentance; the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation to them (2 Pet. 3:9, 15).

5. The example of Christ, and of his patience, is very strong and forcible, and engaging to it; "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example," not of sufferings only, but of patience in them, that we should follow his steps in the exercise of this grace, and learn patience of him, as well as meekness and lowliness of mind (1 Pet. 2:22, 23), we should consider him who "endured the cross" with so much patience, and the "contradiction of sinners against himself" with so much mildness and meekness; lest we be "wearied, and faint in our minds," and grow impatient; this may animate to patience and long suffering.

6. The examples of the saints in all ages may serve to encourage to the exercise of patience; of the prophets of the Old Testament; of the apostles of Christ; and of the martyrs of Jesus; and of other saints; and particularly Job; "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," who was remarkable for it, when his afflictions came so thick, and fast, and heavy upon him; "and have seen the end of the Lord," in his afflictions, and how they issued (Jam. 5:10, 11), and those examples are on record to encourage the saints to be "followers of them" (Heb. 6:12).

7. The near coming of Christ is made use of to stir up to patience; it is but a little while and he will come that shall come; and then there will be an end of all afflictions and sufferings; "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord:--again, Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jam. 5:7, 8), redemption draws near, suffering times will soon be over; the summer is at band, halcyon days will come; peace will be like a river, and the glory of the church like a flowing stream!

---

[50] De Patientia, c. 1.

[51] "Calamitas virtutis occasio est," Seneca de Providentia, c. 4.

Chapter 18

OF CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE

Though saints are to be humble, self-denying, submissive to the will of God, and patient towards all men, and in all things; yet they are not to indulge to pusillanimity and to a meanness of spirit; but to show firmness of mind, resolution, an undaunted courage, and fortitude of soul, a manly spirit, which is not at all unbecoming the Christian; "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7), they should play the man, act the manly part, show themselves to be men, as of wisdom, so of courage; "Quit you like men, and be strong;" which respects not strength of body, but fortitude of mind (1 Cor. 16:13), and is the subject to be treated of. Concerning which may be observed,

1. The nature and necessity of it. It is not a natural fortitude which is meant, and which may be in brutes as well as in men; as in the lion, "which is the strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any" (Prov. 30:30), its courage is equal to its strength; but such natural animosity, or greatness of mind, found among men, is not properly virtue, much less grace, as Christian fortitude is; and which also does not lie in bold and daring enterprises, as when a man attempts things arduous and difficult, and encounters dangers; either of which he has no call unto, but rushes into them unnecessarily and unwarily, without any consultation and deliberation, and without having any good end in view to be answered. This is no other than audaciousness, or rather "temerity," [52] or rashness; and not true fortitude. Also true Christian fortitude is to be distinguished from civil fortitude, or what is exercised in war, in a military way; though the one may bear some resemblance to the other: and even civil fortitude is often but a false appearance; men will make a show of courage, through fear of disgrace, rebukes of their superiors, and military discipline, or of being taken prisoners, and becoming captives; or it may arise from their confidence in their bodily strength, and in the strength and safety of

their armour, and in their military skill, and through ignorance of the strength of the enemy; and it is usually through hope of honour and the applause of men, and sometimes of the spoil; [53] and at most and best, it is exercised for their own good, and the good of their country, which is commendable: but Christian fortitude is concerned about things which are apparently the will of God, and is exercised in obedience to it; for the sake of a man's doing his duty, and with a pure view to the honour and glory of God; trusting in and depending upon his power, strength, and grace, to carry him through whatever he is called to do or suffer in the performance of it; and from which he is not to be deterred by any difficulties that occur, or dangers he may be exposed unto therein: this is fortitude becoming Christians.

Now of such fortitude there is a necessity in the Christian life. When we consider the many duties of religion to be performed by us, and that with constancy and perseverance, both public and private, relative, social, and personal, in which we are to be steadfast and immovable; and when our own weakness is considered, that without Christ we can do nothing, but all things, through Christ strengthening us, it requires great boldness of faith, and confidence in Christ for grace and strength: and since the Christian has so many difficulties and dangers to encounter with; so many discouragements in the way; so many trials, temptations, tribulations, and afflictions, from various quarters, he must be a man of fortitude not to be moved with these things; bearing all with an invincible courage and constancy. To which may be added, the numerous enemies he has to grapple with; enemies mightier than he, who are lively and strong; some not flesh and blood, as he is, but above his match; even principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. Good men dwell in a sinful world, called, "This present evil world;" and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in it; to bear the vexation arising from the filthy conversation of the wicked, as was the case of Lot; and to bear a testimony against them, and to suffer their mockings, insults, and injuries, who are for war when they are for peace, requires great fortitude of mind; their souls are sometimes among lions, men comparable to them, as David's soul was; and they had need to be as "bold as lions," as the righteous man is. Now this being the case, and these the circumstances of the Christian, he has need of great fortitude of mind and of strength, and grace from above to support under them; he has need to be "strong in the Lord, and in the grace that is in Christ" Jesus; to be fortified with the love of God, with the promises of the gospel, and with fresh supplies of grace and strength from Christ. But these things will more largely appear in what will be farther suggested by considering,

II. Wherein this fortitude of mind consists, and whereby it shows itself. And,

First, it appears in the performance of religious exercises, and especially in some. As,

1. In family worship; which undoubtedly is incumbent on the people of God: but now for a man to distinguish himself in a neighborhood from all about him, and to say in his practice, with Joshua, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), let others do what they will; this shows religious fortitude of mind: and in particular when a man first sets up family prayer in his house; suppose the master of a family is the only one in it called by grace, and at a time when he has an irreligious yoke fellow, irreligious children and servants, he sees it his duty, at least once a day, to call them together, and to pray with them; now for this man to fall down on his knees, and pray to his God, and his wife, children, and servants sneering at him and laughing, at least secretly, to one another, requires a fortitude of mind: and if this is not the case, yet it may be he lives alone among wicked neighbours, and so contiguous to them that he cannot pray, nor read the scriptures, nor sing the praises of God, which is the usage of some Christians in their families, without being overheard by them, and exposed to their ridicule and contempt; to bear which constantly is an instance and evidence of fortitude.

2. In a man's giving up himself to a church of Christ, to walk with it in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. For a man to attend public worship on Lord's days is no great trial of his fortitude, because it is what his neighbours in common do; but let him separate himself from the world, and stand out from among them, and give himself up to the Lord in a public manner, and to his people in a church state; and this will try it and show it; for this is practically saying, he is not of the world, and belongs to another

company; and this will unavoidably draw the hatred of the world upon him; and he will be liable to be challenged in a reproachful way, "Thou art also one of them;" as Peter was by a man in the high priest's hall, and who had not then courage enough to own it, but denied it.

3. Especially if such a man comes into a church in a regular manner, by previously submitting to the ordinance of baptism, and to that as it was first delivered and practiced; if he declares against the sprinkling of infants, as an innovation, and openly avows the true doctrine of baptism, as to be administered only to such who profess faith in Christ, and that by immersion; and if he will proceed accordingly, and follow Christ in this now despised ordinance of his, he must be content to be nicknamed, and to have reproach plentifully poured upon him; not only by the profane world, but by the generality of the professors of religion.

But when a man is satisfied that what he is called to do is his duty; that it is a command of God, and ought to be obeyed, though attended with some things disagreeable to flesh and blood, he will take courage, and "be strong, and do it;" as David advised his son Solomon, with respect to building the temple: and when he is encouraged with the divine presence, as Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the Jews were to be "strong and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts;" and as the apostles were, when ordered by Christ to preach his gospel, administer his ordinances, and teach men to observe all that he commanded; and added, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!" this will inspire a good man with courage and resolution to do his duty; nor will he be deterred from it by the edicts of men, though urged with the severest menaces; as the three companions of Daniel bravely refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image, though threatened to be cast into a fiery furnace, as they were; and Daniel, when an edict was obtained from the king, that no man should pray to his God for such a time, under the penalty of being cast into the den of lions; he boldly went on in the performance of his duty; opened his windows, and prayed to the God of heaven, as he had been wont to do in times past: and as the apostles, when strictly charged by the rulers to preach no more in the name of Jesus, and were severely threatened if they did, with great firmness of mind and intrepidity answered, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Promises of grace and strength will animate saints to a cheerful obedience to the will of God, and to the discharge of their duty, amidst all discouragements and difficulties; if God says, as their day is their strength shall be; and that his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness, and his grace be sufficient for them; and bids them, "Fear not, I am with thee; I will strengthen thee!" &c. this will give them a fortitude of mind which will overcome all their fears; and they will say, with David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Isa. 41:10; Ps. 27:1, 3, 4), this is now active fortitude, and shows itself in doing the duties of religion.

Secondly, Christian fortitude shows itself in bearing afflictions with constancy, and enduring sufferings with a firmness of mind, whether from the hands of God or men; and which may be called passive fortitude.

1. From the hands of God, from whom Job was sensible he received his, even his loss of substance, children, and health, and bore it all with an invincible fortitude of mind: this appears when a man's spirits do not sink under the weight of an affliction; but has strength of mind, a fortitude of soul under adversity; "The spirit of a man," of a saint, animated with Christian courage, "will sustain his infirmity," his bodily infirmity, a tedious consumption, or racking pains; or go through any severe operation he may be called unto, with a becoming resolution and manliness (Prov. 24:10; 18:14).

2. From the hands of men; and especially for the sake of the gospel, the truths and ordinances of it; as when saints are called to suffer shame and reproach for the sake of Christ, they, in imitation of him, despise the shame, and account it an honour to bear reproach for his sake; of suffering as a Christian, they are not ashamed, but rather glorify God on that behalf, the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon them; and when they endure cruel mockings, as some of the Old Testament saints did, bear them patiently, and with an invincible firmness of mind; as Christ did on the cross; and as the apostles, when made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and men; when made the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; when reviled, and persecuted, and

defamed, they bore all with a temper of mind which showed them to be possessed of Christian fortitude. Others have suffered confiscation of substance, and took joyfully "the spoiling of their goods," as the believing Hebrews did; and as our forefathers in the last century: and others, "scourging, bonds, and imprisonment;" as did the apostles of Christ, as well as the Old Testament saints; and particularly the apostle Paul, who received of the Jews five times the scourging of forty stripes save one, and was thrice beaten with rods which perhaps left those marks on him which he calls, "the marks of the Lord Jesus" he bore "in his body;" and who was in prisons frequent; and who seems to take a pleasure, and even to glory, in his being a prisoner of Christ, and in chains for his sake; of such an heroic spirit, and with such fortitude was he endued, that none of these things moved him from the gospel of the grace of God. Death itself, in its most formidable shapes, has been endured by the saints with an invincible courage; as by the martyrs in the ten pagan persecutions, and by the witnesses of Jesus against the papal hierarchy; and particularly by our reformers in queen Mary's days, such as Latimer, Ridley, Bradford, and others; who, surrounded with faggots, and these in flames about them, expressed their undaunted courage, firmness, and fortitude of mind to the last. These, with multitudes of others, loved not their lives unto death.

Thirdly, Christian fortitude appears in the spiritual warfare of the saints. There is a warfare for men on earth, and especially for good men, who are soldiers, and must endure hardness, as good soldiers of Christ, and to which Christian fortitude is necessary; and therefore should be, as Joshua was exhorted to be, "strong and of a good courage," when he was called to fight the Lord's battles, and against the enemies of the people of Israel; and as Joab said to Abishai his brother; "Be of good courage, and let us play the man, for our people, and for the cities of our God" (2 Sam. 10:12). And Christian fortitude will show itself,

1. In the defence of the cause of God and truth, in appearing for, and on the behalf of the church of God: "the bed which is Solomon's" which seems to design the church of Christ, "threescore valiant men" are said to be "about it, of the valiant of Israel" (Song of Sol. 3:7), who are valiant for the truth on earth, who are concerned for the welfare of the church, and for the protection of it from errors and heresies; and will not give way, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel may continue with the church, and its ordinances remain pure and incorrupt; and these are not only the ministers of the word, who are set for the defence of the gospel, and who war a good warfare, and fight the good fight of faith, and speak with the enemy in the gate, and are bold in their God to preach the gospel of Christ, as it ought to be spoken; but all professors of religion, and members of the church of Christ, should "stand fast in one Spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and should contend earnestly, eve to an agony, for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and in so doing they show a fortitude of mind.

2. This also appears in fighting against spiritual enemies; as sin, and the lusts of it, which war against the soul; the law in the members warring against the law of the mind; the flesh lusting against the spirit; which are, as it were, a company of two armies. Now one of Christian fortitude will strive against sin, be an antagonist to it, and act the manly part against it; and will wrestle against Satan, and his principalities and powers, and give no place to the devil; but by faith resist him, who, when resisted, will flee, for he is an arrant coward, and does not care to be handled with the armour of Christians; and those young men who are strong, possessed of Christian fortitude, and in whom the word of God dwells, overcome the wicked one: the world also with all its flattering lusts and frowning fury, is overcome by the saints in the exercise of faith (1 John 5:4, 5).

3. The saints have great reason, in their militant state, to be of good courage; since more are they that are for them, than they that are against them; and if God be for them, as he is, who can be against them? and through God they shall do valiantly: the Christian has a good cause, in which he is engaged; he wars a good warfare, and fights the good fight of faith; he has a good Captain, under whose banner he fights, the great Captain of salvation: saints have good weapons, with which they are accoutered; the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit; which weapons are not carnal, but spiritual and mighty, through God, and are such as are proved, and may, with confidence, be made use of; and they are sure of victory beforehand; for all their enemies are conquered, sin is made an end of, Satan, who had the

power of death, is destroyed, the world is overcome by Christ, the warfare is accomplished, and believers are made more than conquerors, through him that has loved them; and therefore may be sure of the crown of life, righteousness and glory, laid up for all that love the appearing of Christ. All which may serve to fill them with an holy fortitude in their spiritual warfare.

Fourthly, Christian fortitude manifests itself in the hour of death. Death is very terrible to nature, and to natural men; the philosopher [54] calls it "the most terrible of all terribles;" and no wonder he should call it so, since he adds, according to his opinion, it is "the end of all things, and that to one that is dead there is neither good nor evil;" such a notion of death, as being an extinction, must be terrible; and the wise man, when he suggests what is most grieving, distressing, and intolerable, says, it is "more bitter than death;" as if besides there was nothing more grievous than that (Eccl. 7:26). To Christless sinners death is the "king of terrors," and even some gracious persons have been all their lifetime through fear of death subject to bondage; but as formidable as it is, there are some things which fortify the Christian against the fears of it. As,

1. That Christ has abolished death as a penal evil, so that it will never be inflicted on the believer by way of punishment. The sting of death is taken away by Christ, which is sin, and a very venomous sting it is, and death thus armed is to be feared; but when its sting is taken out of it, it is not to be dreaded. Any insect with a sting we are naturally afraid of, but if its sting is removed we have no fear of it, though it flies and buzzes about us; so in a view of death being unsung, the believer may sing and say, Death, "where is thy sting?" and be fearless of it.

2. Death to believers is a privilege and blessing; it has a place in their inventory of goods that belong unto them, "death is yours;" it is an happiness to them, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" since they are by it delivered from all evils, from all outward afflictions and inward troubles; from a body of sin and death, under which they now groan being burdened; from the world and its snares, and from Satan and his temptations; and therefore are more happy than living saints; besides they are with Christ, enjoying communion with him, and beholding his glory, which is much better than to be in the present state.

3. Death, though it separates soul and body, and one friend from another, it does not separate from the love of God, but lets in to the more glorious discoveries and enjoyment of it. It is precious in the sight of the Lord, and therefore saints should not shrink at it themselves.

4. It is but once, it is appointed for men once to die, and no more; and it will soon be over, and issue in an happy endless eternity; and when the body dies the soul does not, but immediately enters into a state of glory; death is the inlet into it, and the beginning of it; the birthday of an eternal world [55] of bliss: besides there will be a resurrection of the body, when it will be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, and will be raised in interruption, in power, in glory, and a spiritual body; so the saints will be no losers but gainers by, death, and therefore need not fear it: the resurrection of the body yields comfort in the view of death, and amidst present afflictions, as it did to Job (Job 19:25-27).

5. Be it that death is an enemy, as it is contrary to nature, it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed; and when that is conquered, the victory will be complete over every enemy, sin, Satan, the world, death, and the grave.

6. Besides these things which may serve to promote a fortitude of mind against the fear of death; it may be proper frequently to meditate upon it, to think of it as near at hand, and to make it familiar to us by saying as Job did (Job 17:14), by considering it as going to our God and Father, to our home, to our Father's house; by going to bed and resting in it; and by sleeping, and that in the arms of Jesus.

IV. From whence this fortitude flows, and what the causes of it, may be next considered. It is not from nature but from grace, it is a gift of God; it is he that gives strength and power to his people, not bodily strength only, but spiritual strength; it is he that girds them with strength, with an holy fortitude, and fills them with spiritual courage, and strengthens their hearts, and fortifies them against their spiritual enemies.

1. The efficient cause of Christian fortitude of mind is God, Father, Son, and Spirit. God the Father is prayed unto for it (Eph. 3:14, 16; Col. 1:11, 12), and he which "stablishes saints in Christ," gives them stability and firmness of mind, is God, that is,

God the Father: and it is Christ who bids them "be of good cheer," to be strong and of good courage in the midst of tribulation, since he has overcome the world; and it is "through him" who "strengthens" them that they can do and suffer all things for his sake; and the Spirit of the Lord, as he rests as a "Spirit of counsel and might" on Christ the head, so on his members likewise; and it is a grant of God, a free grace gift of his, that his people be "strengthened with might his Spirit in the inner man" (Isa. 11:2; Eph. 3:16).

2. The word of God is the means of producing and increasing Christian fortitude; it is not only a part of the spiritual armour, called the "sword of the Spirit," but having a place and abiding in the heart, fortifies it against spiritual enemies, and by it victory is gained over them (1 John 2:14; Rev. 12:11), the precious promises contained in it, before hinted at, serve greatly to animate the saints, and to inspire them with fortitude amidst all surrounding evils.

3. Such a temper and disposition of mind is attainable by faith, prayer, and waiting upon God. By faith men so eminent for fortitude of mind performed those heroic exploits we read of in Hebrews 11:1-40, who by faith subdued kingdoms, stopped mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, endured with such greatness of mind the many evils they did; and through constant prayer saints obtain a spirit of boldness both with God and before men; and by waiting upon the Lord in religious exercises their spiritual strength or fortitude is renewed; hence the exhortation, "Wait on the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).

4. The patterns of courage, the examples of fortitude in the saints who have gone before us, of the prophets, apostles, primitive Christians, and martyrs in all ages, may be a means of promoting a like disposition, particularly that cloud of heroes before referred to; and above all Christ himself, the pattern of courage set before us, whom we are directed to look unto and consider, lest we be weary and faint in our minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

5. The love of God, and a sense of that, a persuasion of interest in it, and that nothing shall separate from it, casts out fear, [56] and inspires with fortitude against every enemy (Rom. 8:35, 38, 39; 1 John 4:18).

---

[52] "Fortitudo, non est inconsulta temeritas, nec periculorum amor, nec formidabilium appetitio," Seneca, Ep. 85.

[53] Which are observed by Aristot. Ethic. l. 3. c. 11.

[54] ton phoberota ton o thanatos, Aristot. Ethic. l. 3. c. 9.

[55] "Dies iste, quem tanquam extremum reformidas, aeterni natalis est," Seneca, Ep. 102.

[56] "Non potest amor cum timore misceri," Seneca, Ep. 47.

Chapter 19

OF ZEAL

Zeal is an ardoor of mind, a fervent affection for some person or thing; with an indignation against everything supposed to be pernicious and hurtful to it. As it is a divine grace, it is a vehement affection for God and his glory, an earnest study, by all proper means, to promote it; with a resentment of everything that tends to obscure, let, and hinder it; it is hot, burning, flaming love, which cannot be quenched by water, nor drowned by floods, nor abated, restrained, and stopped, by any difficulties in the way (Song of Sol. 8:6, 7). It is sometimes used for that strong affection God bears to his people, expressed by his earnest care of them, and indignation against their enemies, called, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts, and his great jealousy" (Isa. 9:7; Zech. 1:14; 8:2). And sometimes for a gracious disposition in man, which has God for its object, and is called "zeal towards God," an eager desire after his glory; and of which God is the author, and is called, "A zeal of God," or "a godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2). In treating of which I shall consider,

1. The various sorts and kinds of zeal; that it may be the better known what is right and genuine. And,

First. there is a "zeal of God," which is "not according to knowledge," which the Jews had, as the apostle testifies (Rom. 10:2), and which lay in a zealous concern for the performance of legal duties, and in a studious attempt to set them up, and establish them as a justifying righteousness before God; to the entire neglect and rejection of the righteousness of Christ. Which zeal of theirs, in this attempt, arose,

1. From ignorance of the perfection of God's righteousness, which is displayed in all his ways and

works, who is the Judge of the whole earth, and will do right; and will not clear the guilty without full satisfaction to his justice, nor justify any without a perfect righteousness; and his "judgment of things is according to truth;" and he cannot reckon an imperfect righteousness a perfect one; nor account that for righteousness which is none: to secure his honour and glory in this point, he has set forth Christ to be the propitiatory sacrifice for sin, thereby making satisfaction for it; "to declare his righteousness:" but of this the legal zealot is ignorant, and therefore takes a wrong course.

2. It arises from ignorance of the righteousness which God in the law requires; the law is holy, just, and good, and requires a perfect righteousness; both as to the matter of it, and the manner of its performance; all that the law has commanded must be done, and as it is commanded, or it is no righteousness (Deut. 6:25), and the law is spiritual, and reaches to, and is concerned with the heart, the spirit, and the soul of man; it forbids sinful thoughts, inward lusts, and irregular affections, as well as the outward and grosser sins of life; it allows of no peccaddillo's, or little sins, but condemns all; so extensive is the law, and such the spirituality of it; which the Pharisee being ignorant of, sets up his own righteousness as sufficient, and zealously endeavors to establish it; but it will be of no service (Matthew 5:19, 20).

3. This ignorant zeal arises from a want of knowledge of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel; which is no other than the righteousness of Christ, who is God as well as man: being ignorant of this, its excellency, fullness, and suitableness, men submit not unto it, but reject it, stumbling at the stumbling stone and rock of offence (Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22).

4. It arises from ignorance of their own righteousness; the Spirit of God not having convinced them of it, how imperfect and polluted it is; how it is not answerable to the law of God; and how short it comes of its demands and requirements; and how insufficient it is to justify them before God; and while this is the case they are warmly attached to it, and zealous to establish it: but when they come to be made sensible of the imperfection and unprofitableness of it, they desire to be found in Christ, and in his righteousness, and not their own (Phil. 3:9).

5. It arises from want of faith in Christ; being destitute of that, the zealots follow eagerly after righteousness, but do not attain it; "Because they seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;" now, what is not of faith is sin, and therefore zeal without faith cannot be right; zeal without faith in Christ must be without knowledge, must be without the knowledge of Christ, and without the knowledge of God in Christ; and therefore cannot be well pleasing and acceptable to God; nor is such a righteousness they are following after and endeavoring to establish. Therefore,

6. Such a zealot goes contrary to the will and way of God, in the justification of a sinner; and therefore his zeal must be a false one: the declared will of God is, that a man is not, and cannot be justified in the sight of God by the deeds of the law; but that a man is justified by faith in the righteousness of Christ without the deeds of the law; the way and method God takes to justify men is by grace, freely imputing righteousness, without works, unto them; by making and accounting them righteous, through the obedience and righteousness of his Son (Rom. 3:20, 28, 24; 4:6; 5:9). And therefore it must be a blind, ignorant zeal, which sets up a man's post by God's post, and advances his own righteousness above that of Christ's.

Secondly, there is a mistaken zeal of the glory of God; and for it.

1. When that is opposed which is right, under a false not on of its being contrary to the glory of God; as when Joshua requested of Moses to forbid the young men prophesying in the camp; as being neither, as he thought, for the glory of God, nor to the honour of Moses; and when the priests and scribes were sore displeased at the children in the temple, crying "hosanna" to the Son of David; and when they exclaimed against the works of Christ done on the sabbath day, as if contrary to the honour of the sabbath, and the sanctification of it, and so to the glory of God in it; and such was the indiscreet zeal of Peter in chiding Christ for saying he must suffer many things, as if it was injurious to his honour and glory; when all these things were right.

2. When that which is not for the glory of God, is wrongly thought to be so, and is zealously pursued as such: this is a mistaken zeal; as was the zeal of the idolatrous Gentiles for their idols, and idol worship;

and of the Papists, for their worship of images, angels, and saints departed, and for many other things; and of the Jews, for the traditions of the elders, of which the apostle Paul was very zealous, before conversion; and of the believing Jews, who were zealous for continuing the ceremonies of the law, though abrogated (Gal. 1:14; Acts 21:20).

3. When ways and methods improper are taken to defend and promote the glory of God; as when the disciples, in their zeal for the honour of Christ, were for having fire come down from heaven upon those who had shown some disrespect to Christ; and when Peter, in his preposterous zeal, drew his sword in defence of his Master, and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant; for which both the one and the other were rebuked by Christ (Luke 9:55; Matthew 26:51).

Thirdly, there is a superstitious zeal, such as was in Baal's worshippers, who cut themselves with knives and lancets, while calling upon him; and in all idolaters using a multitude of superstitious rites, of which they are extremely zealous; particularly in the Athenians, who were wholly given to idolatry, and whose city was full of idols; of whom the apostle says, that he perceived that they "were in all things too superstitious;" and therefore, lest they should be at all defective in the objects of their worship, they erected an altar to an unknown God, that they might be sure to comprehend all; and in the Jews, who were zealous of the traditions of the fathers, and were superstitiously careful that they did not eat with unwashen hands, and of the washing of their cups and pots, &c.

Fourthly, there is a persecuting zeal, under a pretence of the glory of God; so Saul, before his conversion, says of himself; "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;" that is, he showed his zeal, as he thought, for the glory of God, when he persecuted the church of Christ, and made havoc of it; and he seems to have respect to this when he tells the Jews that he was "zealous towards God, as ye all are this day;" so the "devout and honorable women," whom the Jews stirred up to persecute the apostles, were, no doubt, under the influence of such a false zeal; imagining, that what they did was for the glory of God, and the honour of religion (Phil. 3:6; Acts 22:3, 4; 26:9, 10; 13:50; see John 16:2).

Fifthly, there is an hypocritical zeal for God; as in Jehu, when he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord;" when, at the same time, he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord, nor did he depart from the sins of Jeroboam; for though he destroyed the images of Baal, he worshipped the calves at Dan and Bethel: and in the Scribes and Pharisees, who brought the woman taken in adultery to Christ, under a pretence of a great regard to the law; and yet were guilty of like sins and others: and in Judas, who pretended regard to the poor, when he only sought to gratify his covetousness: and in the Pharisees, who made a show of great zeal for piety, by their long prayers, when they only sought to devour widows' houses by that means (2 Kings 10:16, 29, 31; John 8:3, 9; 12:5, 6; Matthew 23:14).

Sixthly, there is a contentious zeal; which often gives great trouble to Christian communities: of men of such a spirit the apostle speaks when he says, "If any man seems to be contentious," about trivial matters, things indifferent, and of no moment, "we have no such custom, nor the churches of God;" nor should such be indulged: this sort of zeal is oftentimes no other than a mere logomachy, "a striving about words to no profits" it is a contention about "foolish and unlearned questions," which "gender strifes;" and at best about things curious and useless; whereas true zeal is always employed about the more solid and substantial doctrines of the gospel, and the ordinances of Christ.

Seventhly, sometimes it is only a temporary passion; a flash of zeal, and continues not; so Joash, while Jehoiada the priest lived, did what was right, and showed zeal in repairing the house of God; but after his death, left the house of the Lord God of his fathers, and served groves and idols. John the Baptist was a burning and shining light, and his hearers and disciples burned with zeal for him, his ministry, and baptism, and envied, on his account, the increasing interest of Christ; but it was but for a season they "rejoiced in his light:" so the Galatians were zealously afflicted towards the apostle Paul, to such a degree, that they would have been willing to have "plucked out their eyes" and given them to him; whom they first received as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ, so acceptable was his ministry; and yet he became their enemy, because of his preaching the same truths.

Eighthly, true zeal is no other than a fervent ardent love to God and Christ, and a warm concern for their

honour and glory; such who are truly zealous for the Lord of hosts, love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength; they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, as well as one another fervently; it is accompanied with a saving knowledge of God and Christ; of God in Christ, and of Christ and him crucified; and such prefer the excellency of the knowledge of Christ above all things else, and prefer him to all created beings (Phil. 3:8; Ps. 73:25), they have faith in God, and also in Christ; a faith which works by love, and this love constrains them, inspires them with zeal to seek their honour and glory; whatever they do, whether in things civil or religious, they do all to the glory of God. To true zeal there must be spiritual knowledge, unfeigned faith, and undissembled love; and this stands opposed,

1. To a neutral spirit in religion, to a halting between two opinions, condemned by Elijah in the Jews (1 Kings 18:21). There can be no true zeal to the truth of worship, doctrines, and ordinances, where there is no stability; but a continual wavering and inconstancy.

2. To carelessness and indifference about religious matters; when men, like the Jews of old, regard their own paneled houses, and not the house of God; when they mind their secular affairs more than the interest of religion; when, as to the church of God, the truths of the gospel, and the ordinances of Christ, Gallio like, they care for none of these things.

3. To lukewarmness, with respect to divine and spiritual things; which the Laodicean church is charged with, and resented by Christ (Rev. 3:15, 16). I proceed to consider,

II. The objects of zeal.

First, The object of it is God; even a false zeal is called, "a zeal towards God;" and that which is not according to knowledge, is said to be "a zeal of God;" Jehu called his hypocritical zeal, a "zeal for the Lord;" true zeal most deservedly bears this name; so Phinehas had the covenant of an everlasting priesthood given him, because he was "zealous for his God" (Num. 25:13), which springs from a principle of love to God, and its end is his glory; and it has for its objects the worship of God, the word of God, and the truths contained in it.

1. The worship of God; who must be known, or he cannot be worshipped aright: the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what; and the Athenians erected an altar to an unknown God; and therefore, though they were both zealous of worship, their zeal was not according to knowledge; but true believers worship God in "the Spirit," whom they know in a spiritual way; through faith in Christ, and with a zealous concern for his glory: and they worship him in truth, and keep close to the pattern of worship shown them; to which they are zealously attached, and will not depart from it. Wherefore,

2. The word of God is the object of their zeal; to the law and to the testimony they appeal for the truth of all they say and do; they make that the standard of their faith and practice, and the rule of their worship; they earnestly contend for the perfection and integrity of it; and endeavour, with all their might and main, to preserve it pure and incorrupt (2 Cor. 2:17).

3. The truths contained in the word; they who have a true zeal are valiant for the truth; and can do nothing against it, but everything for it, in defence of it, and for the continuance of it; they will buy the truth, give a great price for it, and highly value it; but will not sell it, nor part with it at any rate.

Secondly, the cause of Christ, is another object of zeal; and which is a good one, and the apostle says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Gal. 4:18), and those who are possessed of this zealous affection, seek not their own things, but the things of Christ; they have a sort of a natural care, as Timothy had, for the state of the churches, and interest of Christ, and of true religion, and for the support of it; not only in that branch of it to which they more peculiarly belong, but in others; as the Corinthian church, who was not only zealously concerned for their own welfare, but for that of others; and the apostle testifies, that their zeal in their liberal ministration to the saints, had "provoked very many" (2 Cor. 9:2). True zeal for the cause of Christ is concerned about the gospel of Christ, the ordinances of Christ, and the discipline of his house.

1. The gospel of Christ: great reason there is to be zealous for that; since it is "the gospel of the grace of God," which displays the free grace of God in every part of our salvation; and therefore the apostle was so zealously concerned for it, as not to count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, by bearing a testimony to it: and because it is, "the gospel of salvation," which publishes salvation

by Christ; and declares, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved: and because it is, "the gospel of peace," preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and by the blood of his cross; and because in it forgiveness of sin is preached in the name of Christ, and justification by his righteousness.

2. The ordinances of Christ; which every true Christian should be zealous for, that they be kept as they were first delivered, without any innovation or corruption; that the mode of administration of both baptism and the Lord's Supper should be strictly adhered to; and that none be admitted to them but believers in Christ, or such who profess faith in him.

3. The discipline of Christ's house should be the object of our zeal, as it was of his; who said, the "zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and this is shown when the rules of discipline are strictly observed, both with respect to private and public offences; when churches, and the members of them, like the church at Ephesus, cannot "bear them which are evil," to continue them in fellowship with them; whether men of immoral lives, or have imbibed false doctrines; but withdraw from them that walk disorderly, and reject such who are not sound in the faith. Hence,

Thirdly, everything that is evil is the object of zeal, or against which true zeal should be expressed. As,

1. Against all false worship, particularly idolatry, or the having more and other gods than one; whether found among the heathens, or any that bear the Christian name; as was by Moses, when his anger, zeal, and indignation, waxed hot against the Israelites for their idolatrous worship of the calf, and he broke the tables of the law which were in his hands, and ordered the Levites to put their swords by their side, and slay every man his brother, companion, and neighbour: and so Elijah, who was jealous for the Lord God of hosts, because Israel had forsaken the covenant of the Lord, had thrown down his altar, and slain his prophets; and where there is true love for God, and zeal for his worship, there will be an hatred of every false way, be it in what shape it may.

2. Against all errors in doctrine; especially such as affect the Persons in Deity, Father, Son, and Spirit; with all others, which are the fundamental doctrines of religion; such as deny them are to be rebuked "sharply," warmly, vehemently, with a becoming zeal, that they may be sound in the faith; such who bring not the doctrine of Christ, respecting his person, office, and grace, are not to be received into the houses of saints, nor to be bid God speed.

3. Against all immorality in practice; true zeal will be as much leveled against a man's own sins as against the sins of others; he will be concerned to remove the beam out of his own eye, as well as the mote out of his brother's; he will be severe against right hand and right eye sins, such as are dear to the flesh as these be; and real godly sorrow for sin, and true repentance unto salvation, is always productive of zeal; "What zeal" it wrought in you? against a man's own sins more especially, as against others; and that which is against the sins of others, is tempered with commiseration and pity to the sinner (2 Cor. 7:11; 12:21).

Fourthly, true zeal is concerned in all the duties of religion, and shows itself in them; in the service of God in general, we should be "fervent in spirit," warm, hot, zealous; "serving the Lord," in such a manner, and not in a cold, indifferent way, and in the ministration of the gospel; it is said of Apollos, that being "fervent in spirit he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord," the doctrines of the gospel, so far as he was then acquainted with them (Rom. 12:11; Acts 18:25). It is also very requisite in prayer to God; it is said of Epaphras, that he was always "laboring fervently in prayers" for the church at Colosse; and it is the effectual "fervent prayer" of the righteous man that availeth much (Col. 4:12; Jam. 5:16). And it should be shown in the love of the saints to one another (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8). In short, believers in Christ ought to be "zealous of good works," careful to maintain them, diligent in the performance of them, especially of those which are the greater and weightier duties of religion; though they are not to neglect and omit the lesser ones. To say no more, good men are the objects of true zeal; the apostle Paul was informed of the "fervent mind" or zeal of the Corinthians towards him, of the warm love and ardent affection they had for him; and he advises them to covet earnestly, to desire the best gifts, spiritual ones, fitting for public service, even prophecy, or preaching (2 Cor. 7:7; 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 12, 39).

III. Motives or arguments exciting to the exercise of true zeal.

1. The example of Christ, whom David in prophetic language represented, saying, "The zeal of thine house

hath eaten me up," consumed his spirits, his strength, and life; so much did he exert himself in his public ministrations: he showed his zeal for the doctrines of the gospel, by his warm and constant preaching them, even with power and authority, as the Scribes and Pharisees did not; in the indefatigable pains he took, travelling from place to place to do it; running the risk of his life, and exposing himself to frequent dangers on that account: and for the worship of the house of God, as appears by inveighing so severely against the traditions of men; by asserting the purity of worship in spirit and in truth; by expressing his resentment at the profanation of the house of God, driving out the buyers and sellers from it; which brought the above passage to the mind of the disciples, who clearly discerned the fulfillment of it: the zeal of Christ against immorality was seen also in his sharp reproofs of the vices of the age, both in professors and profane; and in all he is a pattern worthy of our imitation.

2. True zeal answers a principal end of redemption by Christ (Titus 2:14), and where there is no zeal for God, and for that which he requires an observance of, the claim to redemption seems very precarious. The love of Christ in redeeming his people will constrain them to show a zeal for his glory, both with respect to doctrine and practice.

4. It is "good," the apostle says, "to be zealously affected in," and for that which is good; and it is approved and commended by Christ; as the church at Ephesus was for it, because she could not bear them that were evil; and a contrary disposition, that of lukewarmness, is disapproved of and resented; as in the church of Laodicea, threatened to be unchurched for it; and therefore strongly exhorted to be "zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:15, 16, 19, 20).

5. A lukewarm temper, which is the opposite to zeal, seems not consistent with true religion, which has always life and heat in it; to be neither "cold nor hot" is condemned as having no religion at all.

6. The zeal of persons shown in a false way, should stimulate the professors of the true religion to show at least an equal zeal; for that "all people will walk everyone in the name of his God," and appear zealous for his worship, "we will walk in the name of the Lord our God," at least we ought to do so, and determine upon it. The Pharisees showed great zeal, and took great pains, compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, though made worse than he was, and worse than themselves; and should not we Christians exert ourselves to the uttermost for the interest of the Redeemer (Micah 4:5; Matthew 23:15), this must be a becoming zeal. And in order to keep up and promote such zeal, it will be proper frequently to meditate on the love of God and Christ, the blessings of the gospel of the grace of God, the excellency of the Christian religion, the benefits and privileges of the house of God, and to converse often with warm and lively Christians, and to sit under a savoury and fervent ministry.

Chapter 20

OF WISDOM OR PRUDENCE

Zeal without wisdom or prudence, and unless tempered with it, will be either ignorant, and not according to knowledge, or be rash and precipitant. I say wisdom or prudence, because they are much the same thing, and go together; "I wisdom dwell with prudence;" hence wisdom and prudence, and the characters of wise and prudent, are often mentioned together. Prudence lies in wisely fixing upon a right end of all actions, and in wisely choosing the best means conducive to that end, and in using them at the best time and in the proper manner; "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way" (Prov. 14:8), in divine and spiritual things, to understand the way of salvation, and the way of his duty, and how to glorify God. Concerning which may be inquired,

1. What spiritual wisdom is, as it is an internal grace, or inward disposition of the mind, respecting divine things; a man's duty, the salvation of his soul, and the glory of God. And,

First, it is in general, grace in the heart; which is called "wisdom in the hidden part" (Ps. 51:6), in the hidden man of the heart, where it lies hid, and is only seen in an hearty and sincere profession of religion; and in outward actions becoming such a profession; hence those who are truly wise, are said to be "wise in heart;" and these are the prudent ones; "The wise in heart shall be called prudent" (Prov. 16:21), and such is a man, "when wisdom entereth into his heart;" for it is not originally there; it is not of himself, it comes elsewhere, from without, from above, from God, who gives it entrance, and puts it there. The

heart of man is naturally foolish; as it is desperately wicked, it is extremely foolish; "Their foolish heart was darkened;" and yet this is said of some thought to be very wise; and man is such by nature, by birth; "Vain man would be wise," would be thought to be so, "though man be born like a wild ass's colt," as stupid as that creature is; "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child," in the heart of every child of Adam, and it is only the power of divine grace that can drive it far from him: this is the case of every man; "There is none that understandeth" divine and spiritual things, or things pertaining to salvation; not even so as to know God, and to glorify him as God, and to be thankful for mercies received from him: and this is not only true of a few illiterate men, or of such who have not the advantage of a good education; but even of the wisest philosophers that ever were in this world; for of them these things are said, who, "professing themselves to be wise, became fools" (Rom. 1:21, 22), yea, this is the case, and this the character of God's elect, while unregenerate, and until the grace of God takes place in their hearts; "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish," &c. There is enough of carnal wisdom, of that which is earthly, sensual, and devilish, of wicked subtlety, and too much, "men are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge;" but in that respect are foolish, sottish, and without understanding (Jer 4:22), they have a quick and fruitful invention as to evil things, and get the character of "inventors of evil things;" but cannot think a good thought: men have no true spiritual wisdom but what God gives them, and puts into them; it is he that makes them to know wisdom in the heart experimentally; it is a gift of his; "For the Lord giveth wisdom" (Prov. 2:6).

Secondly, spiritual wisdom in particular, is a right knowledge of a man's self; "nosce te ipsum," know thyself, was a maxim much talked of among the philosophers, but attained unto by none of them; witness the pride, the vanity, the self-conceit, they were swelled with; no man that is wise in his own eyes, and prudent in his own sight, knows himself; for one that was wiser than any of them says, there is "more hope of a fool" than of such; whoever in his own conceit is wise and good, holy and righteous in himself, does not know himself; or who fancies that "touching the righteousness of the law he is blameless," as said the apostle before he knew himself: a man that rightly knows himself, and is possessed of true wisdom, has knowledge of the sinfulness of his nature; of internal lust, as sinful; of indwelling sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it; of the plague of his own heart, and therefore will not "trust" in it, or to the goodness of it, which he that does "is a fool;" he knows his own inability to perform that which is good, and that without Christ and his grace he can do nothing, and therefore will not presume upon nor attempt any thing in his own strength; he knows the imperfection of his own righteousness, and therefore will not depend upon it, nor plead it as his justifying righteousness before God; he knows his soul sickness, his spiritual maladies and diseases, incurable by himself and others, excepting the great physician Christ, to whom he only applies for healing; he knows his own poverty, and therefore seeks for true riches in Christ; gold to make him rich, white raiment to be clothed with, and Christ himself, the Pearl of great price; for which he is willing to part with all, with sinful and righteous self; and, in a word, he knows his own folly, and is ready to acknowledge what a foolish and ignorant creature he is; and until a man has learned this lesson he does not know himself (1 Cor. 3:18).

Thirdly, true spiritual wisdom is no other than "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," which God commands to shine in the hearts of men; while men are destitute of grace, or true spiritual wisdom, they are "without God," without the knowledge of him, his nature and perfections; they conceive of him as altogether like themselves, and fancy that he is pleased with what they are pleased with, and that he judges of things as they do; they are unacquainted with the purity and holiness of his nature, who cannot take pleasure in sin; they are ignorant of his righteousness, and therefore go about to establish their own; and are even stranger's to the grace and mercy of God, as channeled in Christ, and conveyed through him; and therefore depend upon the absolute mercy of God, without any consideration of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ; whereas the true light of the saving knowledge of God is in Christ, and as he has displayed his mercy and grace in him, and proclaimed his name in him (Ex. 34:6, 7), all the divine perfections shine most illustriously in Christ, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and in the great work of

redemption and salvation by him; and true wisdom lies in the knowledge of this.

Fourthly, true spiritual wisdom is no other than the fear of the Lord; both David and Solomon say, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10), there is no wisdom in a man before the fear of the Lord is put into him, and then he begins to be wise, and not before: but Job earlier than them both, says, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28), this includes the whole worship of God, internal and external, flowing from a principle of grace; it takes in the whole duty of man, which it is his wisdom to practice, internally and externally.

Fifthly, it is being wise unto salvation, or in things respecting that. The scriptures are said to be able to make a man wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), and he is a wise man indeed who is thus made wise; and he is one who sees himself lost and undone, and inquires the way of salvation, and says, as the jailor did, "What shall I do to be saved?" and being made acquainted that the way of salvation is by Christ, that there is salvation in him and in no other, applies unto him, says, as the disciples did, "Lord save us, we perish!" and, as ready to perish, such come to Christ, and venture upon him, and commit themselves to him, and say, as the leper did, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," or save me! such build their souls, and the faith and hope of the salvation of them, on Christ, the good, the sure, and only foundation; and as he is a wise master builder who lays this foundation, such are wise unto salvation who build upon this Rock, where their house stands safe against every storm, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail; they give up themselves to him, to be saved alone by him; they prize and value him, and love him above all others; they rejoice in him as God their Saviour, and give him the glory of their salvation! I proceed to observe,

II. Wherein this wisdom practically shows itself.

1. In doing good things in general; such who are wickedly wise, are wise to do evil; but such who are spiritually wise, are "wise unto that which is good," and "simple concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19), and these are capable of doing things both for their own good and for the good of others. They may do good for themselves; "He that is wise may be profitable to himself" (Job 22:2; see Prov. 9:12), he may be profitable, though not to God, yet to himself; for his present good, and the present peace and tranquillity of his mind; for though not "for," yet "in" keeping the commands of God there is great reward; and great peace of mind such have who love and observe the law of God, without trust in and dependence on the observation of it for eternal life: and such wise persons may, by what they do, be useful to others; and therefore believers in God are exhorted to maintain good works; because they are "good and profitable to men;" both because of example and because of real benefit to them. Besides, what a wise man does, and in doing which he shows his wisdom, may be for the honour of religion, to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and put such to the blush who speak ill of religion, and of the professors of it falsely; they may and do adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend it to others, and by their works shining before men, be the means of glorifying God, and even of winning souls to God by their good conversation; and then do they show their spiritual wisdom, when what they do, they do from right principles, and to a right end; when what they do is from love to God, in the faith and strength of Christ, and with a view to the glory of God. And being thus done they are to be shown in "meekness of wisdom," without trusting to them, or boasting of them; acknowledging, that when they have done all they can they are but unprofitable servants; and that it is by the grace of God they are what they are, and do what they do.

2. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in particular in a profession of religion. The kingdom of heaven, or the outward gospel church state, is compared to ten virgins; "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish;" the foolish virgins, or professors of religion, took the lamp of an outward profession, as the rest did, and were careful to trim it, and keep it bright and shining; but were not concerned for the oil of grace, that it might be a burning lamp; but the wise virgins not only took the lamp of profession, but they were concerned to have the oil of grace in the vessels of their hearts, with their lamps, and so continued burning till the bridegroom's coming; and in this they showed their wisdom: as also in holding fast their profession without wavering. Such are wise professors, who, as they take up their profession on principles of

grace, and upon a mature consideration of the cost and charges, difficulties and discouragements, trials and tribulations, they must expect to meet with, so continue steadfast in it; having put their hand to the plough, neither turn back nor look back, but go on believing to the saving of their souls; and yet do not depend upon their profession, do not make it an house to lean upon, nor a plea for eternal life; as some at the last day will plead, that they have professed the name of Christ, embraced his gospel, and subjected themselves to his ordinances; to whom he will say, "Depart from me; I know you not!" (Matthew 7:22, 23; Luke 13:25, 26).

3. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in a becoming walk and conversation; in a conversation that is ordered aright, according to the rule of the word of God, and is becoming and ornamental to the gospel of Christ; it appears when a man walks "circumspectly," with his eyes about him, with his eyes in his head, as the wise man's are, looking well to his going, to his steps, as the prudent man does; his eyes looking right on, and his eyelids right before him, pondering the path of his feet, and neither turning to the right hand nor to the left; when he walks in wisdom towards them that are without, as well as in peace and love towards them that are within; and is careful to give no offence to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God. This wisdom is seen when professors walk not "as fools," in a vain, careless, and sinful manner, but "as wise:" and this they do when they walk as the word of God directs them, and when they walk uprightly, according to the gospel; when they walk as they have Christ for an example, and when they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; and one special and particular instance of their walking wisely is, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil;" and which is done when they lose no opportunity of doing good to others, nor of receiving good for themselves. Considering the days they live in are evil, and subject them to many temptations; and the days of old age, called evil, are hastening on, when they will be incapable of doing or receiving good (Eph. 5:15, 16).

4. This wisdom shows itself in observing the providence of God in the world, and the dispensations of it; in making useful remarks upon it, and in learning useful lessons from it; "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things," things in providence, before related, "even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Ps. 107:43), and it shows wisdom to understand both the ways of God in his providence, and the ways and methods of God in his grace, and the ways he has prescribed his people to walk in (Hosea 14:9).

5. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in a man's concern about his last end and future state, [57] how it will be with him at last, and how it will go with him in another world (Deut. 32:29), how near it is--what that may issue in;--that they be ready for death come when it will, and for an eternal world! The thing to be inquired into is,

III. From whence this spiritual wisdom comes. It is a question put by Job; "Whence cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" the answer to it is, "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof" (Job 28:20, 23), for it is with him originally, and in full perfection, yea, it is in him infinite and unsearchable; it is in his gift to bestow, and is to be asked of him, "that giveth to all men liberally," freely, richly, and bountifully, as they need, "and upbraideth not" with former folly, ingratitude, and mis-improvement of what they have received (Jam. 1:5).

1. God is the efficient cause of it; God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is a good and perfect gift, which is from above, and comes from the Father of lights, from the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, the fountain of all wisdom, who makes men in common wiser than the fowls of the heaven, and his saints wiser in spiritual things than the rest of mankind. It comes from Christ, who is the only wise God and our Saviour; the wisdom of God, whose is counsel and sound wisdom, and who is made to us wisdom, on whom the spirit of wisdom rests, and in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and it is by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

2. The means of this wisdom, and of promoting and increasing it, are, the word of God, the ministers of it, and good men conversed with; the scriptures read and explained, when under a divine influence, and accompanied with a divine power, are "able to make wise unto salvation;" they are written for our learning; and the ministers of the gospel, who show unto men the way of salvation, and "win" souls to

Christ, are "wise," and make wise; and conversation with wise and good men, is a means of increasing wisdom; "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise" (Prov. 11:30; 13:20).

IV. The nature and properties of this wisdom; a full account of which is given (Jam. 3:17).

1. It is "from above;" from God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as before observed; it is conversant about heavenly things; it is celestial wisdom, and stands opposed to earthly wisdom in a preceding verse, wisdom about earthly things, the wisdom of this world, and the princes of it, that come to nought.

2. It is pure in itself, and in its effects; it is productive of purity of heart, life, and conversation; the effect of it is pure and undefiled religion, and the observance of it; those who have it, hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and are obedient to the divine precepts, out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned; it is opposed to that wisdom which is sensual, and employed in sensual gratifications, and to carnal wisdom, the "wisdom of the flesh," or carnal mind, said to be enmity against God (Rom. 8:7).

3. It is "peaceable;" it influences the professors of it to be at peace among themselves, and with one another; and to live peaceably, as much as possible, with all men; to cultivate peace in families, among neighbours, and even with enemies.

4. It is said to be "gentle;" it makes those who have it to be gentle towards all men, moderate, and humane, to bear and forbear, to bear the infirmities of the weak, to forbear and forgive one another injuries done; and for the sake of peace and love to recede from their just right, and not bear hard on others for their failings, but cover them with the mantle of love.

5. It is "easy to be entreated," or persuaded, to put up with affronts, to condescend to men of low estate, and not mind high things; for "with the lowly is wisdom;" to yield easily to the superior judgment and stronger reasonings of others; to be readily inclined and induced to hope and believe the best of all men; and to entertain a good opinion of good men and their conduct.

6. It is "full of mercy and good fruits;" it fills men with compassion on those in distress, and puts them upon acts of beneficence to the poor, according to their ability; to feed and clothe them, to visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and comfort them; and to do other duties and good works, as fruits of righteousness, of the grace of God, and of the Spirit.

7. It is "without partiality;" without partiality to themselves, esteeming each other better than themselves; and to others, showing no respect of persons, making no difference in Christian fellowship between rich and poor, and giving to the poor and needy without distinction, favour, or affection.

8. It is "without hypocrisy," to God and man; not making a show of what they have not, and intend not to do; as it is a grace, it has a close connection with faith unfeigned, with hope which is without hypocrisy, and with love which is without dissimulation. All which shows how useful and desirable such wisdom is, and how necessary throughout the conduct of a Christian life to do his duty, to avoid the snares and temptations he is liable to, to seek his own good, and the good of others; and, above all the glory of God.

---

[57] "Isthuc est sapere, non, quod ante pedes modo est, videre; sed etiam illa quae futura sunt prospicere." Terent. Adelp. act. 3. sc. 4.

Chapter 21

OF GODLY SINCERITY

Sincerity stands opposed to hypocrisy; than which nothing is more detestable to God; and nothing is more agreeable to him than uprightness and integrity: this is called "godly sincerity," eilikrineia theou, "sincerity of God" (2 Cor. 1:12), which God requires, approves of, and is a grace he bestows upon his people. What is sincere is pure and unmixed, [58] and what retains its native colors especially white, as milk, pure and unmixed; hence we read of the "sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2), and fine flour without any bran, or any leaven in it; hence the phrase of "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8 the Latin word "sincerus," from whence our English word "sincere," is composed of "sine et cera;" [59] and signifies "without wax;" as pure honey, which is not mixed with any wax. The Greek word eilikrineia, signifies properly, a judgment made of things by the light and splendor of the sun; as in business men hold up goods they are buying to the light of the sun, to see if they can discover any defect in them: some think there is an allusion in it to the eagle, who holds up her young

as soon as fledged to the sun, and if they can bear the light of it without winking, she retains as her own; but if not, she rejects them as a spurious brood. Light makes everything manifest; and such who are truly gracious and sincere, their principles and practices will bear the test of light, for the day declares them what they are; nor do they shun it: but they whose doctrines and deeds are evil do not care to come to it, lest they should be discovered: and herein lies a principal difference between sincerity and insincerity; see (John 3:19-21).

1. I shall consider this grace of sincerity as it is truth in the heart; as it regards the truth of particular graces there; as it is concerned in doctrine professed or preached; as it has to do with divine worship; and as it appears in the walk and conversation of the saints.

First, as it is truth in the heart; for that seems to be meant in (Ps. 51:6). "Thou desirest truth in the inward part," sincerity, integrity, and uprightness of soul: hence we read of a "true heart," which is sincere and upright in all its concerns with God; which is the same with a "clean heart," and a "right spirit" renewed in a man; which David prays for (Ps. 51:10), and such who are possessed of this grace of sincerity in their hearts, are described as such who,

1. Are "pure in heart." The apostle Peter wrote his second epistle to the saints, "to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3:1), it is in the Greek text, their "sincere mind;" [60] a sincere mind and a pure heart are the same; not that any man's heart is so pure as to be free from sinful thoughts, inclinations, desires, and affections; yet, though not perfect, may be sincere; and none are more ready than they, ingenuously to confess and lament the impurity of their hearts; nor any that more "love pureness of heart," and desire it, which shows their sincerity; and that there are such it is certain, since our Lord pronounces them blessed; "Blessed are the pure in heart;" who, though not perfect, are yet sincere and their hearts are right with God.

2. They am said to be "sound in heart," in doctrine and practice; "sound in the faith," in the doctrine of faith; using "sound speech," and embracing things which become "sound doctrine," such are the "wholesome words" of our Lord Jesus Christ: and sound in practice, who have a sincere regard to the ways and worship, ordinances and commands of God; have a cordial affection for them, and observe them in reality, and truth, and heartily, as to the Lord; for this David prays, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes" (Ps. 119:80), that is, sincere in the observance of them; see (Prov. 14:30).

3. The same are described as single hearted, having a single eye to the glory of God in all they do; and stand opposed to "a double minded man," who is "unstable in all his ways;" and to those who have "a double heart, a heart and a heart," as it were two hearts; or at least, whose hearts, words, and actions, do not agree; they are not sincere in what they say or do; speak one thing and mean another; so do not sincere persons (Jam. 1:8; Ps. 12:2).

4. Sincere persons, who have truth in their hearts, are the same with "the upright in heart," who are hated and persecuted by wicked men; but "loved" by the Lord, and to whom he is good, and does good to them (Ps. 11:2; 125:4), who have right spirits renewed in them, new hearts and new spirits given them; whose intentions, desires, and views are upright.

5. Who like Jacob, are "plain men," or "plain hearted;" such a man as Job was (Job 1:1), where the same word [61] is used of him as of Jacob; and is the character of all true Israelites; as of Nathanael, said to be an "Israelite indeed," one of Jacob's genuine sons, "in whom was no guile" (Gen. 25:27; John 1:47).

6. Such may be said to have truth or sincerity in the heart, the desires and affections of whose hearts are after God; as the church's (Isa. 26:9), and who, as David, pant after the Lord, after more communion with him, and conformity to him; and express their strong and hearty affections for God, as Asaph did (Ps. 42:1; 73:25).

7. Who approve themselves unto God, and are desirous to be searched and tried by him, if sincere or not, as David did (Ps. 139:23, 24).

Secondly, sincerity may be considered as it regards the truth of particular graces in the heart, which it is connected with, and concerned about. "Sincere" is an adjective, and must have something put to it to explain it; there must be a sincere something, and that something may be bad as well as good, wrong as well as right. Saul was a sincere Pharisee, and really thought that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless; yea, a sincere persecutor, for he thought verily he ought to do many things contrary to

the name of Jesus; as many others, who thought they should do God good service in killing the disciples of Christ. So that sincerity is to be judged according to what it is applied; and it seems not to be a distinct grace of itself, but to go through, and be an ingredient in every grace; which proves the genuineness of it. As,

1. Repentance; for there is a feigned repentance; as in Judah (Jer. 3:10), such was the external humiliation of Ahab, which was not in reality, only in outward show and appearance; yea, many tears may be shed, and yet no true and sincere repentance; as in Esau (Heb. 12:17), and in others who pretend to repentance; their tears may be only what are called crocodile tears. But when repentance is from the heart, and sorrow is after a godly sort and sincere, it produces such like effects the apostle mentions in (2 Cor. 7:11).

2. Faith is a grace also which is distinguished by its sincerity; for there is a faith that is feigned, as was that of Simon Magus, who professed to believe, but truly did not; that is a sincere faith which is "with the heart unto righteousness;" or is a believing "with all the heart," as was required of the eunuch, previous to his baptism; and is called "faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5).

3. Hope, by the sincerity of it, is distinguished from the hope of the hypocrite, which is as the spider's web, and is of no avail at death; but a hope that is sincere is fixed on a good foundation; not on man's riches or righteousness; but upon the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; and is lively, and he that has it purifies himself as he is pure.

4. Love, both to God, if true and genuine, is "with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the strength;" and love to Christ is from the heart, and "in sincerity" (Eph. 6:24). The church always describes Christ her beloved, even when she was in a disagreeable frame and posture; "Him whom my soul loveth!" And love to the saints, when right, is not in "word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth," that is, hearty and sincere (1 John 3:18), and is called "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet. 1:22).

Thirdly, sincerity may be considered as it regards doctrine professed or preached. "The sincere milk of the word," unmixed and unadulterated, as desired by truly newborn babes; and by all such who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious;" they desire, as it is promised them, to he fed "with the finest of the wheat," with the pure bread of the gospel, without the bran of human mixture, without the chaff of man's inventions; for "what is the chaff to the wheat?" they cannot live on husks, which swine do eat, but upon the kernel of divine truths, and cannot be satisfied, but "with honey out of the rock," pure and unmixed; hence the church's lips, expressive of her profession, are said to "drop as the honeycomb," pure virgin honey, sincere and without wax; and "honey and milk" are said to be "under her tongue," pure and sincere doctrine, received, retained, and spoken by her (Song of Sol. 4:12), for with the same sincerity the mouth confesses as the heart believes; whereas, an insincere man will not openly profess Christ and his truth, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God; as the Pharisees did. So the faithful and sincere ministers of the word do not "corrupt the word of God," adulterate it, mix it with the doctrines of men; as hucksters mix their wine with water, or other liquors, to which the allusion is (2 Cor. 2:17). "Renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth," in the most upright manner, "commending" themselves "to every man's conscience in the sight of God:" and then do they appear to be sincere, when their word, their doctrine, is not "yea and nay," contradictory, and inconstant, but uniform, and all of a piece; and when the gospel trumpet, as blown by them, does not give an "uncertain sound" (2 Cor. 4:2; 1:19; 1 Cor. 14:8).

Fourthly, sincerity may be considered with respect to worship; which ought always to be performed in a sincere and upright manner, as Joshua said to the people of Israel; "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Joshua 24:14).

1. Worship in general is sincere, when it is performed "in spirit and in truth;" in a spiritual manner, with the whole heart and spirit, and under the direction and influence, and by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and according to the truth of the divine word, and with truth in the heart; for "God is a Spirit," and must be worshipped in such a manner; and such worshippers, and such only, are agreeable to him; but as for those who draw nigh to him "with their mouth, and have removed their heart far from him," or are insincere worshippers of him, he despises and rejects

(John 4:23, 24; Isa. 29:13).

2. Prayer in particular is to be put up to God with a true heart; that is, with a sincere one, with which men should draw nigh to God; for he is nigh to them that "call upon him in truth;" that is, in sincerity; it is the prayer which comes, "not out of feigned lips," that God hears; it is "the prayer of the upright," that is, the sincere man, that is "his delight:" when such who, as the hypocrites, pray in synagogues and in corners of the streets, to be seen of men, are treated with contempt and abhorrence.

3. And then sincerity appears in the observance of ordinances; when men, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; and keep the ordinances, as they were delivered, without any innovation and corruption; and when they keep the feast, particularly that of the Lord's Supper, not "with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

Fifthly, sincerity may be considered with respect to the walk and conversation of the saints; "Blessed are the undefiled," or the perfect and sincere "in the way;" in the way of God's commandments, walking according to the rule of the divine word, and as becomes the gospel of Christ (Ps. 119:1), and it is with respect to such an external walk before men that the apostle says, that "in simplicity," in the singleness of his heart, "and godly sincerity," such as God requires and approves of, "we have had our conversation in the world" (2 Cor. 1:12), and they act the sincere and upright part, who,

1. Desire not so much to be seen by men, as to be approved of God. The Pharisees, hypocrites, did all they did to be seen of men; they gave alms, they prayed, and zealously observed the traditions of the elders; and all to get applause of men: but the sincere believer labours, that "whether present or absent he may be accepted of God," and approved by him; for not he that commends himself, and seeks the praise of men, "is approved," but "whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 5:9; 10:18).

2. "Who have respect to all the commandments of God, and esteem all his precepts, concerning all things, to be right" (Ps. 119:6, 28), and are careful not to break the least of his commandments; who omit not the weightier matters of the law, or the more important duties of religion, and yet neglect not lighter and lesser ones.

3. Who make conscience of committing lesser as well as greater sins; but abstain from all appearance of evil; who desire to be cleansed, and to be preserved from secret sins, as well as to be kept back from presumptuous ones; who are as severe upon their own sins as on those of others, and even spare not right eye and right hand sins, those they are the most inclined unto; and are as careful to remove the beam out of their own eyes, as to observe the mote in the eyes of others.

4. Who do not seek to cover, palliate, and extenuate their sins; as Job says, "If I cover my transgressions as Adam," and sought excuses for them as he did, such do not act sincerely; "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Job 31:33; Prov. 28:13).

5. The man who walks according to the rule of the word, makes that the standard of his practice, and walks uprightly according to the gospel; and walks as he has Christ for an example, as in the exercise of every grace, so in the performance of every duty; and walks, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

6. Who has the glory of God, and the good of others in his eye, in all that he is concerned; who does whatever he does in things civil and religious with a view to promote the glory of God, and the interest of true religion, and the good of immortal souls; who naturally cares for the spiritual and eternal state of men; and whose concern throughout the whole of his own conversation is, that others, beholding his good works, may receive some benefit to themselves by his example, and glorify his heavenly Father. I go on to observe,

II. From whence this grace of sincerity springs.

1. Not from nature; it is not from descent and by birth; indeed, our first parents, previous to their fall, were in a state of simplicity, not as that signifies folly, but singleness of heart, integrity, and uprightness; such was the case of Eve, before she was beguiled, and corrupted from her simplicity by the serpent. "God made man upright," innocent, holy, and harmless; but he sinned, and lost his integrity, "and sought out many inventions," and excuses, to palliate and cover his sin; what an insincere and disingenuous part did Adam act, when he would have thrown off the blame of eating the forbidden fruit from himself,

and cast it upon his wife? and of the same disposition are all his sons and daughters naturally; there is none upright among men; the most upright are sharper than a thorn hedge; and this is true, not of some particular nation only, and of some particular persons in it, and in some certain age and period of time; but of all the descendants of Adam; who, be they good or bad in the event, are transgressors from the womb, and go astray from thence, speaking lies; there is no truth m their inward part; yea, "their inward part is very wickedness;" not only wicked, but wickedness; yea, very wickedness, extremely wicked; the same is meant when the heart is said to be "desperately wicked," irrecoverably such, but by the grace of God; hence flow all that dissimulation, deceit, hypocrisy, and falsehood which are in the world.

2. But sincerity is from the grace of God; though it is not a distinct grace of itself, as before observed, yet belongs to, and is an ingredient in every grace; and is what distinguishes true grace from that which is counterfeit; it is "the grace of God in truth," in sincerity; it is every grace with that; and it is by the grace of God alone that men become sincere and upright; without this men are double hearted, double tongued, and deceitful: there may be a show, an appearance of sincerity and uprightness, where there is none in reality; as in the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who appeared outwardly righteous to men, but within were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

3. Wherever true sincerity it, it is of God; and is therefore called, "Godly sincerity," or "sincerity of God," that which has God for its author, who is the God of all grace; he that is the maker of the heart, the searcher of it, and sees what is in it, can only make it sincere and upright; who made a profane Esau, and a plain hearted Jacob to differ, but God by his Spirit and grace? and these fruits of the Spirit, grace, uprightness, and sincerity, are only found in regenerate persons, new creatures, who have "put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness, or holiness of truth," [62] that which is in sincerity and reality, and not dissembled and feigned (Eph. 5:9; 4:24). Wherefore,

4. Since it is of God, and him only, it is to be asked of him; he desires truth in the inward parts; he requires it, saying, "Thou shall be perfect," or upright, or sincere, "with the Lord thy God," before him, in his sight (Deut. 18:13; see Gen. 17:1). It is he only that can give a new heart and a new spirit, and create it in the new man, therefore to be prayed to for it by all sensible of their need of it; hence these petitions of David; "Renew a right spirit within me, and let my heart be sound in thy statutes" (Ps. 51:10; 119:80). And so the apostle prays for the Philippians, that they might "be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). And the rather,

5. This should be sought for, since it is so much approved of by God, who sees and searches the heart; "I know also my God," says David, "that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness" (1 Chron. 29:17). "His countenance doth behold the upright" (Ps. 11:7), he smiles upon him, and takes delight in him. What an approbation of Job does he express? and what a testimony does he give to him, because of his sincerity and uprightness, and his perseverance therein? (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Which will still more fully appear by considering,

III. The happiness of such who are possessed of this grace.

1. The light of spiritual joy and gladness is provided for such persons; and is in this life, at least at times, bestowed upon them (Ps. 97:11; 112:4).

2. All the blessings of grace and goodness are not only wished for, but given unto them: "Grace," the blessings of grace, are described to be "with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and both grace and glory are given to, and "no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly," that is fit and proper for them (Eph. 6:24; Ps. 84:11).

3. Such are protected and defended from all evil, and from every enemy: the Lord himself "is a buckler to them that walk uprightly; yea, his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect," or sincere, "towards him" (Isa 33:15, 16; Prov. 2:7; 2 Chron. 16:12).

4. Such who "walk uprightly, walk surely," on good ground, in a good path, and by a good rule, and "shall be saved; the way of the Lord," in which they walk, "is strength unto the upright," they grow stronger and stronger (Prov. 10:9, 29; 28:18).

5. Those enjoy the presence of God now; "The upright shall dwell in thy presence" (Ps. 140:13). "The pure in heart shall see God," and be with him

for ever; "The upright shall have the dominion" over the wicked, in the morning of the resurrection; and as for the sincere and perfect man, his "end is peace," everlasting peace and happiness (Matthew 5:8; Ps. 49:14; 37:37).

---

[58] to katharon kai amiges eterou, Suidas in voce eilikrines.

[59] So Donatus apud Vallum; but Valla himself thinks it is rather of sun et cera; "quasi cum cera, mel quod integrum est et solidum et nulla sui parte fraudatur." Elegant l. 6. c. 31.

[60] ten eilikrine dianoian.

[61] Matthew.

[62] osioteti tes aletheias.

Chapter 22

OF SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS

The contrast between a carnal man and a spiritual man, and between carnal mindedness and spiritual mindedness, is very strongly expressed by the apostle in Romans 8:5, 6. "They that are after the flesh," carnal men, sinful, and corrupt, who are as they were born, having nothing but flesh, sin, and corruption in them, without the Spirit, and his grace, who walk after the flesh, and fulfil the desires of it; these "mind the things of the flesh," their minds are "fleshly minds," they seek nothing but the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and employ themselves in doing the works of it, which are called, The sins of the flesh, the consequence of which is death; "For to be carnally minded is death," eternal death, the just wages of sin; as it must needs be, since such carnality is sin and sinful, and enmity against God, as in the following verse: now the spiritual man, and spiritual mindedness, and the consequence of that, are the reverse of all this. As will appear by considering,

1. Who are the men who mind spiritual things, and are spiritual men. They are described as "they that are after the Spirit." Not all that think they are spiritual men, and would be thought such, are so; "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual," as a man may, and yet be neither; and therefore every spirit, or everyone that professes himself to have the Spirit, and to be a spiritual man, is not to be believed; but "the spirits," or such who call themselves spiritual men, are to be "tried" by the word of God, whether they are such or not; they may seem so to others, and yet not be such; and if only outwardly righteous, or externally reformed in their lives, they may be at most but moral men, not spiritual men; yea, men may have a "form of godliness," a show of spirituality, yet not have the truth and power of it; they may look like virgins, and appear as spiritually wise, and yet be foolish. Nor are all truly spiritual men, who have "spiritual gifts," as they may be called, distinct from special grace; for the apostle, after having discoursed of spiritual gifts, speaks of a "more excellent way;" and observes, that men may have various gifts, extraordinary and ordinary, and yet be destitute of true grace (1 Cor. 12:1, 31; 13:1-3). Nor are such only intended who have a greater degree of spiritual knowledge, and of real grace than others; for though these are most certainly spiritual men, and of the highest class (1 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 6:1) yet they are not the only ones; others, who have less knowledge, and a lesser degree of grace, are also entitled to this character. Much less such are meant who have no flesh or sin in them; for there are no such spiritual men on earth; none but the saints in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect; and who, at the resurrection, will have spiritual bodies. But,

1. They are such who are regenerated, renewed, and quickened by the Spirit of God; they are such as our Lord describes, as "born of water and of the Spirit," or of the Spirit of God compared to water; and who and whatsoever is so born, is spirit, or spiritual (John 3:5,6), such are born of God, and made partakers of the divine nature; "not of blood," by carnal generation and descent, "not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed;" begotten again of God to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, according to his abundant mercy, and of his own sovereign will and pleasure; and are a "kind of first fruits of his creatures;" yea, they are new creatures; for the grace bestowed on them is, "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and have new hearts and new spirits given them, and the Spirit of God put into them, by whom they are quickened, who before were dead in trespasses and sins; but now the Spirit of life from God enters into them; and like the slain witnesses, and Ezekiel's dry

bones, stand on their feet and live: and being thus made alive, they breathe in a spiritual manner, after salvation, and the way of it, and the knowledge of it; and after Christ, when directed to him; after God, and communion with him; after a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy: all which, and more things of a spiritual nature, they vehemently desire, with their whole souls and spirits; and may be truly said to be spiritually minded.

2. They are such who have their spiritual senses, and that in exercise, to discern both good and evil, to choose and mind the one, and to refuse and shun the other; they have a spiritual "sight," a discerning of things, even of spiritual things, which are only "spiritually discerned;" and which spiritual discernment the natural man has not; but the spiritual man has, and can make a judgment of them; try things that differ, approve the more excellent, and prefer them; they have the seeing eye given them, the eyes of their understandings are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of themselves and of Christ: this one thing they can say, "whereas they were blind, they now see;" see themselves lost and undone, and Jesus as their only Saviour; and they behold his glory, fulness, excellency, and suitableness as a Saviour: they now hear the gospel with pleasure; it is a "joyful sound" to them, good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation by Christ; they hear the voice of Christ, and are charmed with it, and their affections are drawn out to him; they hear it so as to understand it, and be delighted with it, and to distinguish it from the voice of a stranger, and therefore follow him, and not a stranger: they "taste," and have a gust for spiritual things; they taste that the Lord is gracious, and invite others to come and taste, and see how good he is; the words of Christ, the doctrines of the gospel, are sweeter to their "taste" than the honey or honeycomb; the fruits that drop from Christ, while sitting under his shadow, the blessings of grace, which are from him, are also sweet and pleasant to their palate: they "savour" the things which be of God and Christ, and which are of a spiritual nature; because of the "savour of his good ointment," his rich graces, their love is drawn forth to him; they "smell a sweet savour" in his person, righteousness, and sacrifice; all his garments, his garment of salvation and robe of righteousness smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia: they "handle" the word of life, lay hold on Christ, the tree of life, and pluck, and take, and eat of the fruit that grows upon it; and when they have lost sight of Christ, their beloved, and have found him again, they embrace him in their arms, hold him fast, and will not let him go. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto them; they receive it cordially, and the love of it, and feel it powerfully working in them, and find themselves strongly influenced by it to love and serve him.

3. They are capable of spiritual acts and exercises, and do perform them; spiritual men, and they only, "worship God in the Spirit," in a spiritual manner, with their spirits, and under the influence of his Spirit; and such worship, as it becomes their character, is only acceptable to God; when the worship of carnal and formal professors is very disagreeable to him: they can talk and converse with each other about spiritual things; the Lord turns unto them, or bestows upon them a pure language, the language of Canaan, which they speak, and in which they speak one to another, so as to understand and be understood by each other; as they are favored with abundance of rich inward experience, out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak, in Christian conference with one another; and their speech in common conversation betrays them, and shows to what company they belong, and that they are not carnal, but spiritual men: and they are capable of walking, and they do walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; which distinguishes them from carnal men, and entitles them to the character of spiritual men; yea, they walk in the Spirit, and live in the Spirit, and are led by him, out and off of themselves, to Christ, and the fulness of grace in him, and into all truth as it is in Jesus; and such who are under his leadings and teachings, as they are the sons of God, they must be spiritual men, and mind spiritual things.

4. They have much of the Spirit of God in them, the several graces of the Spirit of God; as faith, hope, love, and all other fruits of the Spirit. The good work of grace, of which he is the author, the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, is begun in them by him, and will be carried on, performed and perfected; he works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and whatsoever is well pleasing in the sight of God, and strengthens them to do the will

and work of God; under his influence they exercise every grace, and grace is the governing principle in their souls; they are not under the law, but under grace, and therefore sin has not the dominion over them; but grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord; yea, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, frees them from the law of sin and death, from the tyrannical power of it; so that they appear to be spiritual men, and to be spiritually alive. And even the Spirit of God himself dwells in them, and is the criterion which distinguishes them from carnal men; "Ye are not in the flesh," that is, ye are not carnal men; "but in the Spirit," spiritual men, "if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you;" and therefore called the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost; the world, carnal men cannot receive him, nor know him; but the true disciples of Christ know him; for he dwells with them, and shall be in them (Rom. 8:9; John 14:17), though even in these spiritual men there is much carnal mindedness, carnal affections, and lusts, and desires; "The flesh lusteth against the spirit;" and they are ready to say, with the apostle, "I am carnal; with the flesh I serve the law of sin" (Rom. 7:14, 24, 25).

II. What the spiritual things are, spiritual men mind; from which they are denominated spiritually minded men.

1. They mind their own souls, and the spiritual and eternal welfare of them; not only when they were first awakened to a sense of their sinful state and danger, and cried out, What shall we do to be saved? and when they first asked the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards, and first gave up themselves to the Lord, and to a church of Christ, by the will of God; but afterwards, by making use of all opportunities, public and private, for their profit and edification, to promote the prosperity of their souls, which spiritual men are more mindful of than of their bodies.

2. The law of God is spiritual (Rom. 7:14), and this is minded by a spiritual man. This has great things in it worthy of consideration, and to be minded, respecting the good of men and the glory of God; and yet many are unmindful of it, yea, cast it away and despise it, "and count it as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12), unworthy of any notice and regard; but the spiritual man, whose eyes are spiritually enlightened, and the vail taken off from them, beholds "wondrous things" out of it, especially as in the hand of Christ, and fulfilled by him; and they may be said to mind it, and to be spiritually minded towards it, when they meditate upon it, the author, nature, and usefulness of it. It is the character of a good and happy man, that "in his law" (the law of God) "doth he meditate day and night;" not in it as a terrifying, cursing, and condemning law; but as instructing, and informing into the nature of sin and duty, and as magnified and made honorable by Christ, who has fulfilled both the preceptive and penal part of it; and of which David says, "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day!" (Ps. 1:2; 119:97), yea, spiritual men not only love it, "and great peace have they which love thy law;" but they delight in it, as did that spiritual man the apostle Paul; "I delight in the law of God after the inner man;" see (Ps. 1:2; Rom. 7:22), and they are willingly subject to it, and serve it with pleasure. The "carnal mind," phronema tes sarkos, "the wisdom, of the flesh;" or the man who is under the influence of it, and is carnally minded, is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" but the wisdom of the Spirit, or he who is under the influence of that, and is spiritually minded, is subject to it, and with his mind serves the law of God.

3. The gospel, and the truths of it, which are spiritual things; "If," says the apostle, "we have sown unto you spiritual things," the seed of the word, and the precious truths of the gospel, "is it a great thing, if we should reap your carnal things?" partake of somewhat of your worldly substance (1 Cor. 9:11), these are the things of the Spirit of God, or the spiritual things which the natural man receives not, because foolishness to him; as the doctrine of the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Christ is; nor does he know it, value and esteem it, it being only spiritually discerned; which spiritual discernment he has not; but the spiritual man judges spiritual truths, and discerns the difference of them from others, and the true value of them; his taste discerns perverse things, and distinguishes good and bad; and he esteems the word of truth more than his necessary food, and counts them savory food, such as his soul loves; he finds the word of salvation by Christ, and he eats it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of his heart; it is like Ezekiel's roll, which was in his mouth "as honey for sweetness;" it is "the sincere milk of the

word" which newborn babes desire; and is meat for strong men, to which spiritual men have their minds well inclined: and on divine and evangelical truths they dwell in their thoughts and meditations; as on the doctrines of everlasting love, of the covenant of grace, and the transactions of it; "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple!" and on the doctrines relating to the person, offices, grace, and righteousness of Christ; to which may be applied the words of the Psalmist, "My meditation him shall be sweet!" (Ps. 48:9; 104:34).

4. Spiritual blessings are minded by spiritual men; such as the elect of God are blessed with in heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3), as election in Christ, acceptance with God in him, redemption, pardon, justification, adoption, and eternal life; these are things spiritually minded men have their hearts set upon, and are often revolving in their minds; these are blessings indeed, which they are importunately desirous of; they seek first the "kingdom of God and righteousness," and such like spiritual and heavenly things; believing, that all other things of a worldly kind shall be given unto them, needful for them, about which they are not anxiously solicitous, not minding them in comparison of others.

5. Being built up a "spiritual" house, and being a holy spiritual priesthood; they are concerned to offer up "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," even the sacrifices of prayer and praise, which they offer up by their great High priest, and which become sweet odors, being perfumed with the incense of his mediation; and they themselves are made joyful in the house of prayer, their offerings being accepted with God upon his altar; which draw their spiritual minds hither, and make them intent upon such sacrifices.

6. Spiritually minded men employ themselves in spiritual services; they present their bodies a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice, which is but their reasonable service; and concerned they are to serve the Lord in every religious duty acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, and in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives. Moreover,

7. They exercise themselves in each of the graces of the Spirit of God; their minds are very intent upon, and very desirous of a growth in every grace, that their faith may be increased and grow exceedingly; that they may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; and that their love also might abound yet more and more. To all which may be added,

8. That spiritually minded men have their hearts, affections, and conversations in heaven; their hearts are where their treasure is, and that is in heaven; their affections are set on things above, where Jesus is; and their conversation is in heaven, from whence they expect Jesus their Saviour.

III. It may next be inquired, how any of the sons of men come to be spiritual men, and to be spiritually minded. They are not so naturally, or by their first birth; they are born of the flesh, and are flesh, carnal, sinful, and corrupt; their "minds are fleshly," or they are carnally minded; their minds and consciences are defiled with sin, and from thence nothing proceeds but what is sinful; their minds are vain and empty, and they walk in the vanity of their minds; they are without God, any true knowledge of him, love to him, and fear of him; they have not learned Christ, and think nothing about him; they are sensual, not having the Spirit, nor any of his graces: they mind earth, and earthly things, these engross all their thoughts, affections, and desires; all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are the principal entertainments of their minds, and what they are chiefly conversant with; their natural bias is to that which is evil; the imagination of the thought of their heart is evil, and that continually yea, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil; and such is the disposition of their minds, that they cannot think anything of themselves, especially that which is spiritually good. This being then the case of the minds of men naturally, there must be a renewing of the mind, or it must be cast into a different mould: ere a man can be spiritually minded, he must have a new heart and a new spirit put within him; the Spirit of God must "work" in him "to will," must give him an inclination and disposition to that which is spiritually good; he must enlighten his mind, and fill it with the knowledge of spiritual things; must put the laws of God into the minds of men, and write them in their hearts; he must influence and attract their affections to spiritual things, and make them in love with them, and thoroughly convince them of the evil of carnal mindedness, and the sad effect of it, death; and of the advantages of spiritual mindedness, next to be

considered.

IV. The effects and consequences, and so the evidence of being spiritually minded.

First, life: "To be spiritually minded is life:" they must be alive who are spiritually minded, and they must be alive in a spiritual sense; their spiritual mindedness is an evidence of their spiritual life, and makes it plainly appear that they are in such sense alive. This is manifest,

1. From the exercise of their senses, before observed; they have their spiritual senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling; and therefore must have life, without which there can be no senses, and the exercise of them; as he who has his natural senses must be naturally alive, so he that has his spiritual senses must be spiritually alive.

2. From acts of spiritual life performed by them; they breathe after spiritual things; prayer is the breath of every spiritually minded man; "Behold, he prays!" and this shows life; he discourses of spiritual things, which discovers the temper and disposition of his mind; his walk and conversation is spiritual, he walks and lives by faith on Christ, and walks on in him as he has received him.

3. From the lively exercise of grace in him, and fervent discharge of duty. His faith is a living; and not a dead faith; his hope is lively, and his love is as strong as death, and cannot be destroyed by it: all which evidence his spiritual life; and the exercise of these graces evidences his spiritual mindedness; and hence follow a fervency of spirit in serving the Lord, and a running in his ways without weariness, and a walking without fainting.

4. Such who are spiritually minded are not only alive themselves, but they are the means of enlivening others by their spiritual conversation; by their spiritual counsel and advice: by their spiritual consolation they administer, and by their spiritual exhortations stirring up to love and good works.

5. Spiritual mindedness issues in everlasting life; which is the gift of God, and flows from his grace; which all that are spiritually minded partake of, and shall have it; this is certain from the promise, that whosoever seeth the Son, and believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life; and from the grace of God in them, which is a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life; and from the Spirit of God in them, the earnest of it, and who makes meet for eternal life, and introduces into it, because of the righteousness of Christ, which entitles to it.

Secondly, another effect and consequent of spiritual mindedness is peace; "To be spiritually minded is peace;" inward peace of soul, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and is had in a way of believing in Christ; it flows from the righteousness of Christ received by faith, and from his peace speaking blood in the conscience; and the spiritual things their minds are conversant with, are productive of internal peace, and serve to maintain and increase it. Spiritually minded persons are of peaceable dispositions; they are desirous to "lead a quiet and peaceable life," under whatsoever government they be; and "as much as lieth in them," they endeavour to "live peaceably with all men," in the neighborhoods in which they are; to promote peace in their families, and among their friends; and "study to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," among the saints in a church state, in which they, are; to do otherwise would be to act the carnal part, and walk as men (1 Cor. 3:3). And to close all, spiritual mindedness issues in everlasting peace, the end of such a man is peace, he departs in peace, he enters into it; and this is his everlasting portion and happiness.

Chapter 23

OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

The exercise of a good conscience is a branch of internal religion, and is concerned with the worship of God; God is to be "served with a pure conscience" (2 Tim. 1:3). And it has to do not only with things natural and legal, accusing or excusing, as the law of nature directs; and with things civil, with obedience to civil magistrates, to whom we are to be subject, "not only for wrath," or fear of punishment, "but also for conscience sake;" their office being of God, and an ordinance of his (Rom. 2:14,15; 13:5), but likewise with things religious, spiritual, and evangelical; things respecting both doctrine and practice; "The mystery of the faith," or the peculiar and sublime doctrines of the gospel, are to be held "in a pure conscience;" and the ministry of the word is to be exercised, "holding faith," the doctrine of faith, and a "good conscience"

with it (1 Tim. 3:9; 1:19; see Heb. 13:18), yea, every good work, rightly performed, springs from hence (1 Tim. 1:5). A good conscience has God for its object, it respects his word, will, and worship; and therefore is called, "conscience towards God" (1 Pet. 2:19), as repentance is repentance towards God, and faith is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; or suneidhsiV qeou, "conscience of God," which is of God, has God for its author, being implanted in the mind of man by him; it is God's vicegerent, which acts for him, and under him, and is accountable to him. I shall consider,

First, what conscience is, and its office.

1, What it is. It is a power or faculty of the rational soul of man; by which it knows its own actions, and judges of them according to the light it has: some take it to be an habit of the mind; others an act of the practical judgment, flowing from the faculty of the understanding by the force of some certain habit.

1. It is a "science," or knowledge, as its name shows; a knowledge of the will of God, and of a man's actions, as being agreeable or disagreeable to it; it is a "common" science or knowledge, and therefore called "conscience," common with other men, and also with God; by which it knows what is true, just, and right with God, and so what is fit to be done or not done; it is that by which a man is conscious to himself of his secret thoughts, as well as of his actions; it is the spirit of a man, which only knows the things of a man within him, and knows those things which only God and himself knows.

2. From this knowledge arises a judgment which conscience forms of itself and actions, and accordingly approves or disapproves of them, and excuses or accuses for them; to which judgment the apostle refers when he says, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31), and this is made in the view of the judgment of God, and is submitted to that, and has that joined with it, it is a joint testimony; and even sometimes God himself appeals to the judgment of conscience, as well as conscience appeals to God; "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard" (Isa. 5:3; see Rom. 9:1).

3. It is the will of God revealed, which is the rule of conscience, its knowledge and judgment; either revealed by the law and light of nature, which was the rule to the Gentiles, who had not the written law (Rom. 2:14, 15), or by the moral law written, which contains that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God, concerning things to be done or not done; or by the gospel, which instructs in the doctrines of grace, and enforces the duties of religion by them, and is a rule to walk by (Gal. 6:16).

4. Hence nothing can bind the conscience but the law and will of God; it is God's vicegerent, acts for and under him, and receives its authority and instructions from him, and is accountable to him, and to no other; it is a debtor to him, and owes obedience to his will; it is constrained by it, laid under a necessity to observe it, and cannot do otherwise: let men say what they will to the contrary, or be clothed with what authority they may, parents, masters, magistrates, have no power over children, servants, and subjects to oblige them to what is contrary to the dictates of conscience, according to the will of God; no laws of men are binding on conscience, which are not according to, or are contrary to the law and will of God; "We ought to obey God, rather than men," is the determination of the apostles of Christ (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29).

Secondly, the office of conscience, what it does and ought to perform, when it does its duty.

1. It is a light to enlighten men in the knowledge of the will of God; it is that light which lightens every man that comes into the world; which is had from Christ the Creator of men; and shows unto men what is their duty to God and man; it informs them both what they are to do, and what to avoid; "The spirit of man," which is his natural conscience, is "the candle of the Lord," which he lights up in the soul of man, "searching" the inmost recesses of the heart; especially if enlightened by the word and Spirit of God (John 1:9; Prov. 20:27).

2. It takes cognizance of a man's actions; it keeps a good lookout, and watches over them; it has a sort of an omniscience belonging to it; it sees all his goings, yea, it sees his heart, and what passes through that, marks his ways and works, and numbers his steps.

3. It takes an account of them, and registers them; it is a book in which all are written; and though it may be shut up for the present, and little looked into, there is a judgment to come, when the books will be opened, and the book of conscience among the rest; according to which men will be judged.

4. It acts the part of a witness for or against men, as even in the heathens; "Their conscience bearing

witness" to their actions, good or evil; and so their thoughts excused or accused one another. So the conscience of a good man bears witness for him, and is a co-witness with the Holy Ghost, to which he can appeal, as the apostle did (Rom. 9:1), so the consciences of Joseph's brethren witnessed against them, when they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother" (Gen. 42:21), hence the common saying, "Conscience is as a thousand witnesses;" it is so whether as good [63] or bad.

5. Conscience is a judge, acquitting or condemning. So the conscience of Samuel acquitted him of all charges that could be brought against him, as did God and his people also (1 Sam. 12:5). Such a clear conscience had Job; "My heart," says he, that is, my conscience, "shall not reproach," or condemn "me, so long as I live" (Job 27:6). In this sense the apostle uses the phrase, and points at the office of conscience (1 John 3:20, 21).

6. In wicked men it has the office of a punisher, or tormentor; and a greater punishment, and a more severe torment cannot well be endured than the stings and lashes of a man's own conscience; [64] this is what the scripture calls the worm that never dies; and the heathens meant by a vulture feeding on men's hearts or livers.

Secondly, the various sorts of conscience; which may be reduced to these two, an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22), and a "good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:19).

First, an evil conscience; the consequences of which are guilt, terror, distress, and sorrow, sooner or later, unless the heart is purged from it by the blood of Christ; of which there are different sorts.

1. Which is blind and ignorant, arising from an understanding darkened and alienated from the life of God, through ignorance; when in some it comes to that pass, as to have lost the distinction between good and evil, and between darkness and light; and some do not care to come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved; and others, like corrupt judges, are bribed with a gift, which blinds the eyes of the wise; and others are so sottishly superstitious, that they think they do God service when they take away the lives of his people; and such a conscience was Saul's, when he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, and therefore made havoc of the church.

2. A dull, heavy, stupid conscience, which is no more affected than a man that is asleep; and though in danger, as a man asleep in the midst of the sea, and on the top of the mast, yet careless, unconcerned, and secure; and though stricken and beaten feels it not, and is quite stupified; and like a man in a lethargy, unless a great noise is made, is not easily roused; as Pharaoh, whose conscience was alarmed with the thunder and lightnings, and then he owned he had sinned; but when these were over, he returned to his former hardness and stupidity: and even in good men conscience may be lulled asleep, and continue stupid for a considerable time; as in the case of David, till Nathan was sent to him, and charged his conscience, saying, "Thou art the man."

3. A partial one, when it overlooks greater sins, and is very severe on lesser ones; as Saul bore hard on the Israelites for the breach of a ceremonial law, in eating flesh with the blood, when he made no scruple of slaying fourscore and five priests of the Lord at once: and as the chief priests, who pretended it was not lawful to put the money into the treasury wherewith Christ was betrayed, because it was the price of blood, and yet it was the same money these wicked men had given to Judas to betray him: and likewise it is partial, when it suffers a man to neglect duties and services of the greatest importance, and puts him upon lesser ones; as Saul in his conscience thought he did well when he killed the lean kine, and spared the best of the flock and herd: and so the Pharisees, who omitted the weightier matters of the law, and were strict to observe the traditions of the elders, which were no part of the law.

4. A bribed one; as Herod's conscience was bribed with his oath, and pleaded that for the cutting off of the head of John the Baptist: and the Jews endeavoured to make their conscience easy, in pleading for the taking away the life of Christ, that they had a law, that he who made himself the Son of God should die.

5. An impure one, as the conscience of every unregenerate man is; "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15), and so the conscience of a weak brother may be defiled through the imprudent use of a liberty, by a stronger on (1 Cor. 8:7).

6. A seared one, one cauterized, seared, as it were,

with a red hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2), and so becomes insensible of sin and danger, and past feeling any remorse for sin; it is without any consciousness of it, and repentance for it (Jer. 8:6).

7. A desperate one, or one filled with despair; as Cain's was, when he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" and Judas's, who said, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood!" and went and killed himself: and especially such will be the consciences of the damned in hell, whose worm dieth not, but they will be ever in black despair.

Secondly, a good conscience. There may be in unregenerate men, a conscience in its kind good; it may be naturally good, when it is not morally, spiritually, and evangelically good. Conscience, when it does its office according to its light, is a natural good conscience; as in the heathens, though they were guilty of sins their conscience did not charge them with; so the apostle Paul, before his conversion, "lived in all good conscience" (Acts 23:1), though a blasphemer and a persecutor. And there may be in good men a conscience not commendable, and which, in a sense, cannot be called good. As,

1. There may be in them a mistaken and erring conscience; "Some with conscience of the idol," thinking it to be something, when it is nothing, "eat it as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled" (1 Cor. 8:7).

2. A doubting conscience. The apostle Paul had no doubt, but was firmly persuaded, "that there is nothing unclean of itself;" yet observes, "that he that doubteth" whether it is unclean or not, and to be eaten or not, "is damned," that is, is condemned by himself (Rom. 14:14, 23).

3. A weak conscience; which arises from weakness of faith about things lawful and pure (Rom. 14:1, 14; 1 Cor. 8:7), which is soon and easily disquieted, grieved, and troubled, at seeing others do that which it doth not approve of (Rom. 14:15), and which at once judges and condemns another man's liberty (Rom. 14:3; 1 Cor. 10:29), or which, by the example of others, is easily drawn to the doing of that by which it is defiled, wounded, and destroyed, as to its peace and comfort (1 Cor. 8:7 ,9-12).

4. A conscience smitten and wounded, which, though not sinful, may be said to be evil, and not good, because distressed; thus David's heart, or conscience, smote him when he had numbered the people, and made him very uneasy, disquieted and uncomfortable; and sometimes it is so smitten, pricked, and wounded, and so loaded with guilt, that it is intolerable; a "wounded spirit," or conscience, "who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14).

5. There is a conscience enlightened and awakened with a sense of sin and danger; which, though for the present distressing, issues well; as in the three thousand pricked in their hearts, who said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and in the jailor, who came trembling before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" which, though attended with great agonies in both instances, issued well, in repentance unto life and salvation, not to be repented of; the immediate effects of a truly awakened conscience, are shame and confusion of face for sin; as in our first parents, who attempted to cover their nakedness, and hide themselves; see (Rom. 6:22), dread of the divine Being, fear of punishment, and wrath to come (Rom. 4:15), an ingenuous confession of sin, and sorrow for it (1 Tim. 1:13; 2 Cor. 7:10), from which shame, fear, and sorrow, it is relieved by a discovery and application of pardon through the blood of Christ, which, and which only, makes the conscience a good one. The epithets of a good conscience are,

(1). A tender one; as in Josiah, trembled under a sense of sin, affected with a godly sorrow for it, one that cannot easily comply with a temptation to commit sin; as in Joseph, who said to his mistress, tempting him, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" and having the fear of God before its eyes, and on its heart, cannot do what others do; as Nehemiah (2 Kings 22:19; Gen. 39:9; Neh. 5:15).

(2). A conscience void of offence; such as the apostle Paul was studiously concerned to exercise (Acts 24:16), careful not to offend, by sinning against God, and to give no offence to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God; and this he studied to have "always;" not at one time only, but continually; and not in some things only, but in "all things" (Heb. 13:18).

(3). A pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3). Conscience is defiled with sin, as all the powers and faculties of the soul are: a pure or purified conscience, is a conscience purged from the dead works of sin by

the blood of Christ; an heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the same; that is the fountain to wash in for sin and for uncleanness, that only cleanses from all sin (Heb. 9:14; 10:22), such a conscience is only a good one.

Thirdly, The effects of a good and pure conscience; which must make it very desirable and valuable.

1. Freedom from the guilt of sin. This the priests under the law could not remove with their sacrifices, and so could not "make the comers to them perfect;" could not make their consciences perfect, nor ease them of the burden of sin, and purge them from the guilt of it; then they would have "had no more conscience of sins," whereas there was an annual remembrance of them, notwithstanding these sacrifices. From whence it appears, that such who have a truly purged and purified conscience, by the precious blood and better sacrifice of Christ, "have no more conscience of sins" they are purged from: not but that they make conscience, and are careful to avoid committing sin; but the guilt of sins being removed by the blood of Christ, their consciences do not condemn them for sins that have been committed by them, and from which they are purged (Heb. 10:1,2).

2. Peace of soul and tranquillity of mind. The blood of Christ "speaks better things than that of Abel; the blood of Abel," in the conscience of his brother, the murderer, spoke terror, wrath, and damnation; but the blood of Christ, in the conscience of a sinner, purified by it, speaks peace, pardon, and salvation; one that is justified by faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ, has peace with God, and peace in himself; the effect of this is, "quietness and assurance for ever."

3. Joy, as well as peace, is another effect of a good and pure conscience; especially when atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ is applied and received into it (Rom. 5:11), yea, the testimony of conscience, with respect to integrity and uprightness in conversation, under the influence of divine grace, yields joy and pleasure to a good man (2 Cor. 1:12), as an evil conscience troubles and distresses, and gives sorrow; a good conscience exhilarates, and makes joyful and cheerful; [65] the wise man says, "a merry heart," which some interpret of a good conscience, "makes a cheerful countenance, and hath a continual feast" (Prov. 15:13, 15).

4. Boldness, confidence, and glorying in the midst of calumnies, reproaches, and persecutions from the world, is another effect of it; a man of a good conscience can defy all his enemies, and put them on proof of making good their calumnies, and can easily refute them; as Samuel said (1 Sam. 12:3), and such a man, for "conscience towards God, can endure grief, suffering wrongfully;" not as an evil doer, but as a Christian; and therefore is not ashamed, but "glorifies God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 2:19; 4:15, 16), yea, if a man's heart and conscience does not condemn him, then has he "confidence towards God" (1 John 3:21), as well as towards men. [66]

5. The effect of a good conscience, purified by the blood of Jesus, is a deliverance from the fears of death and judgment to come; such a man is not "afraid of evil tidings" now, of evil times approaching, and of judgments coming upon the earth; nor is he terrified at the alarms of death, but meets it with a composed mind, and has confidence that he shalt not be ashamed before the Judge of all at his coming. And these are so many arguments why, Such a conscience is to be "held," and held fast; a good man should exercise himself to have it, and to exercise it, and himself in it, and be careful to do nothing contrary to it; but make use of all means to preserve it, by frequently communing with his own heart, by taking heed to his ways, and by having respect to all the commandments of God; and especially should deal with the blood of Christ continually for the purifying of his heart by faith in it, and for cleansing him from all sin.

---

[63] "Bona conscientia turbam advocat; male etiam in solitudine anxi a atque solicita est----O te miserum si contemnis hunc testem," Seneca, Ep. 13.

[64] "Nihil est miserius quam animus hominis conscius," Plaut. Mostellar. act. 3. sc. 1. v. 13.

[65] "Gaudium hoc non nascitur nisi ex virtutum conscientia; non potest gaudere nisi fortis, nisi justus, nisi temperans." --Seneca, Ep. 59.

[66] "----hic murus aheneus esto, Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa." ----Hor. Ep. l. 1. ep. 1. l. 60.

Chapter 24

OF COMMUNION WITH GOD

Communion with God is the top of the saints

experience in this life, it is the height of experimental religion and powerful godliness. This, of all the enjoyments of God's people on earth, is the nearest to the heavenly bliss; and could entire "perfection" and "endless duration" be added to it, it would be that. I shall consider,

First, communion with God in general, which appears chiefly in a large communication of grace, and the blessings of it from him conveyed through Christ, and applied by the blessed Spirit; and in a free exercise or grace upon him, under a divine influence: in all which is enjoyed much of the divine presence.

First, communion is founded in union, and arises from it. There is an union between God and his people; for the more open manifestation and evidence of which our Lord prays (John 17:21), "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us!" This original union is a federal union between God and them, taking them into a covenant relation to himself; by virtue of which he becomes their God, and they become his people; it is a conjugal union between them, as between husband and wife; "thy Maker is thine Husband" (Isa. 54:5). The evidence of which union is the gift of the Spirit to them in regeneration and conversion; when there appears to be a vital union and a mutual inhabitation of God in them, and of them in God; "hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The bond of this union is the everlasting love of God to them. As it is the love of one friend to another which knits their souls together; as the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul; and as the saints in a spiritual relation are "knit together in love," and by it; love is the cement which unites them: so it is the love of God in his heart towards his people which attracts them to him, and unites them with him; and which bond is indissoluble; for nothing shall be able to "separate from the love of God," nor to separate from him, who are interested in his love; and in the manifestation of this love unto them lies much of their sensible communion with God; as an effect and evidence of this his everlasting love to them, he with lovingkindness draws them to himself in the effectual calling, when large displays are made of it to them, and at times they have some plentiful effusions of it; the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, by the Spirit that is given them, and their hearts are directed into the love of God; insomuch that they are "rooted and grounded" in it, and are persuaded of their interest in it; and comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of it; they are made to drink largely of this river of pleasure, the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; in the participation of which they have much solace and refreshment, and enjoy much communion with God.

Secondly, the grand blessing of grace flowing from this union, is covenant interest in God; than which there cannot be a greater blessing; "happy is that people whose God is the Lord!" and this covenant interest always continues, it can never be destroyed; "This God is our God for ever and ever!" and this is the foundation blessing, from whence all others take their rise; "he that is our God, is the God of salvation!" of all the blessings of it (Ps. 144:15; 48:14; 68:20), of all the spiritual blessings saints are blessed with in Christ, and of all grace from him, and all the supplies of it; "My God," my covenant God, "shall supply all your need!" (Eph. 1:3; Phil. 4:19). Now in the perception and enjoyment of this grand blessing, covenant interest in God, communion with him greatly lies; God sometimes says to his people, even when they are fearing and doubting, "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God!" and they in the exercise of faith say, as David, "I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said unto thee, Thou art may God!" (Isa. 41:10; Ps. 31:14), they avouch the Lord to be their God, and he avouches them to be his peculiar people; "I will say," says the Lord, "It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God!" (Zech. 13:9), and when this is the case, sensible communion with God must be enjoyed: the Lord is the portion of his people; and when he says to them as he did to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;" and they in return say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him" (Gen. 15:1; Lam. 3:24), their portion now in the land of the living, and their portion for evermore; under such a discovery, and in such a view of things, there must be communion with God: they have a mutual interest in each other; the Lord's people is his portion, and he himself is the portion of Jacob; and therefore with great propriety may they be said to be "heirs of God;" an amazing phrase! expressive of

property, interest, and fellowship. Hence,

Thirdly, there is a mutual intercourse between God and his people; which is variously expressed in scripture.

1. By their mutual indwelling in each other, and which follows upon covenant interest, and is an evidence of it; as was the Lord's dwelling among the people of Israel; "I will dwell," says Jehovah, "among the children of Israel, and will be their God," make it manifest to them thereby, as follows, "and they shall know that am the Lord their God;" hence he ordered a "sanctuary" to be made, that he might "dwell among them;" and in this sanctuary, or tabernacle, an ark was put, and over the ark a mercy seat, and on that the cherubim, between which Jehovah dwelt; and from whence he promised to commune with Moses concerning all things relative to the people of Israel: an emblem this of saints communion with God, through Christ, at the throne of grace (Ex. 29:45, 46; 25:8, 22). And God not only dwells in particular congregated churches of Christ, who are built up an habitation for God, through the Spirit; such as were the churches at Corinth and at Ephesus (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:22), but in particular persons, who love Christ, and keep his commandments; of whom he says, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him!" a phrase expressive of constant and continued communion at least for a while (John 14:23), and on the other hand, such dwell in God, who has been "the dwelling place of his people in all generations," and is "their strong habitation, whereunto they may continually resort" (Ps. 90:1; 71:3), and such dwell in God, who live in the continual exercise of grace upon him; and particularly of the grace of love towards him, and towards his people; "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16), this is communion.

2. By a mutual walking together; which shows agreement, and is expressive of fellowship; "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). God and his people are agreed; reconciliation to God is made for them by the death of Christ, and reconciliation is made in them by the Spirit of Christ; and both are signified in (Rom. 5:10), and being thus agreed, they walk together; God walked with the children of Israel in a tent and in a tabernacle, which moved from place to place; and he walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, particular churches, as he has promised; "I will dwell in them, and walk in them;" and so in individual believers (2 Cor. 6:16), and they walk with him; thus "Enoch walked with God;" as did Noah and others (Gen. 5:24; 6:9), as do all believers, they walk by faith on God as their covenant God, and walk humbly before him, and in all his commandments and ordinances blameless; in which they have much communion with him.

3. By a mutual converse together; they talk together, God speaks to them, and they speak to him; such familiar fellowship had Abraham with God, about the affair of Sodom; which, when over, it is said, "he left communing with him" (Gen. 18:33), and such had Moses also, with whom God is said to "commune," to talk with him, and to "speak" to him "face to face" (Ex. 25:22; 31:18; 33:9, 11), and something similar to this, is the experience of all the saints, when the Lord appears unto them, and talks with them, and tells them that he has loved them with an everlasting love, and has drawn them to himself with the cords of it; when he visits them, and discloses the secrets of his heart unto them (Ps. 25:14), and they talk with him, and speak to him in prayer; they have access to him through Christ, and that with freedom and boldness, through his blood and righteousness, and come up even to his seat, and tell him all their mind, make known their requests unto him, and pour out their souls before him; much of communion with God lies in prayer, private, family, and public.

4. By a mutual sitting down and feasting together; the table on which the shewbread, or bread of faces, was set, was typical of the saints communion with God, and the enjoyment of his presence, through the mediation of Christ; so was the meat offering, part of which was burnt for a savour, a memorial of it to the Lord, and the rest was eaten by Aaron and his sons. God has spread a table for his people, and made a feast of fat things for them, on his holy mountain; where they feast with hint, and he with them; more particularly in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which much spiritual communion is enjoyed; of which more hereafter.

Secondly, who the persons are who have communion with God.

First. Not unregenerate men, such who are in a state of nature; for they are in a state of alienation from the life of God; they are at a distance from him, their

sins separate between God and them. Adam, in his state of innocence, had nearness to and communion with God; God frequently conversed with him, made known his mind and will to him, and bestowed very special favours upon him; but that whisperer, sin, soon separated chief friends; and man falling into sin, was banished from the divine presence; "So he drove out the man" from the garden of Eden, as an emblem of the estrangement of him and his posterity from God; which is the case of them all.

Secondly, not any who are in the native darkness and blindness of their understandings, and walk therein; which is the condition all men are in by nature; everyone "walks in darkness:" and now "what communion hath light with darkness?" as persons enlightened by the Spirit and grace of God, can have no spiritual communion with such who are altogether in the dark about spiritual things; much less can there be any communion between God, who is light, and such who walk in darkness (1 John 2:11; 1:5, 6).

Thirdly, such who are dead in sin, as all men naturally are, can have no communion with God; for as "what agreement hath the temple of God" (the temple of the living God) "with idols?" lifeless creatures: so what agreement can there be between the living God and dead sinners? such must be quite strangers to a life of communion with God; when it is "a time of life," and so of open love, then, and not before, does God spread his skirt over such persons, as a token of their conjugal relation to him, and enters into covenant with them, or manifests to them their covenant interest in him; and so they openly become his, and are admitted to fellowship with him (Ezek. 16:8).

Fourthly, no unholy and unrighteous persons have communion with God; for "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" as not righteous men with unrighteous men in a church state; so not a pure, holy, and righteous God, with impure and unsanctified sinners; even with none but such who are created in righteousness and true holiness; who are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Fifthly, Not any in whom sin is the governing principle; in whom it reigns, and who commit it with as much boldness and impudence as if they had a law for it (Ps. 94:20), but God is of such unspotted purity and holiness, that he cannot take pleasure in sin, neither shall evil men dwell with him, not now nor hereafter; but shall be bid to depart from him as workers of iniquity. But,

1. Such only have communion with God, or are admitted to fellowship with him, who are loved and chosen by him; such whom for the great love wherewith he has loved them, he has quickened them by his Spirit and grace, and with lovingkindness has drawn them to himself; those whom he has chosen to be holy, and without blame before him in love, he causes to approach to him now, and gives them nearness to him, and fellowship with him.

2. Such who are redeemed and reconciled by Christ, through his sufferings and death; by which he has made satisfaction for sin, and so removed that which lay in the way of a sinner's communion with God: Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, "that he might bring us to God," into a state of open communion with him; and such "who are sometimes afar off," with respect to communion, "are made nigh by the blood of Christ;" by which means obstructions in a way of fellowship are removed, and only such persons are admitted to it.

3. Such chosen and redeemed ones, who are regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God; for his work is necessary to communion with God; "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," enjoy him, and have fellowship with him, neither now nor hereafter. The gift of the Spirit, as a Spirit of sanctification, and the operations of his grace on the hearts of men, are the great evidence of union to God, from whence flows communion with him (1 John 3:24; 4:13). I go on to consider,

3. Thirdly, the special fellowship which such persons have with Father, Son, and Spirit, distinctly; the apostle John says, it is "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3), to which may be added (Phil. 2:1). "If any fellowship of the Spirit:" and also (2 Cor. 13:14). "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." All which put together, show that the saints have a communion with each person in the Godhead.

First, with God the Father, as he is the Father of Christ; who, as such, has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and as such, has chosen them in him to holiness and happiness, and as such,

regenerates them, according to his abundant mercy; and is the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace and comfort to them; and as he is their covenant God and Father in Christ, through whom they have access to him as their Father, and address him as their Father in heaven, and call upon him for what they want, and under the witnessings of the Spirit of adoption, cry Abba, Father; and say, "doubtless, thou art our Father:" and then may they be said to have communion with him as such, when their faith and hope are exercised on him; and they are affected with his wondrous love in taking them into his family, and putting them among the children, and encouraging them to call him their Father, and not turn away from him; which obliges them to say, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" (1 John 3:1), and when they are sensible of the feelings of his heart for them, his sympathy with them, pity and compassion on them, under all their afflictions, temptations, trials, and exercises (Isa. 63:9; Ps. 103:13), then have they fellowship with the Father.

Secondly, with Christ: fellowship with him is what the Lord's people in the effectual calling are particularly called unto (1 Cor. 1:9), and what Christ himself invites them to (Song of Sol. 4:8), and which lies,

1. On his part, in a communication of grace unto them, which they receive at his hands; he is full of grace, all fulness of it dwells in him, and out of his fulness they receive, and grace for grace, an abundance of it, especially at first conversion, when the grace of Christ is exceeding abundant, flows and overflows; and afterwards they have a sufficiency of it to help them in all their times of need, a constant supply of it as they want; Christ has been, in all ages, "the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, and as streams from Lebanon" to all his churches and people; and with joy do they draw water out of the full wells of salvation in him, and become strong in the grace that is in him, to which they are allowed and encouraged to have recourse at all times.

2. On their part this fellowship lies in the exercise of grace upon Christ; in the goings forth of their souls to him in acts of faith, hope, love, joy, &c.

3. Upon his Person, as the Son of God, beholding his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and the express image of his Person; when he appears to them altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousands, and the only and all sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him; and when they are encouraged to look to him and be saved, and live by faith on him, the Son of God, who hath loved them and given himself for them; and when their love is attracted to him, the unseen Saviour, and the desires of their souls are to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and they have hope of eternal life, and an expectation of it, as the free gift of God through him, and rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh, then have they fellowship with him.

4. Upon him as considered in his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. They have communion with him as their Prophet, who teaches them by his Spirit, word, and ordinances; and from whom they receive that anointing which teacheth all things; to him they hearken as the great Prophet of the church, embrace the doctrines of his gospel, and pay a regard to all the instructions of his lips, and in whose hearts the word of Christ dwells richly, and works effectually: they deal with Christ, and have fellowship with him in his priestly office; they have to do with his blood, for the remission of their sins, and the cleansing of their souls; and with his righteousness for their justification before God, and acceptance with him; and with his sacrifice, for the atonement and expiation of their iniquities; and on account of all this have much peace, joy, and comfort, in a way of believing. They consider him as the High Priest over the house of God, who transacts all affairs for them; they make use of him as their advocate and intercessor with the Father, and put their petitions into his hands, to be offered up by him, perfumed with the much incense of his mediation; they acknowledge him as their King, submit to his government, yield obedience to his commands, and esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right. Saints have such communion and fellowship with Christ in his offices, that they have in some sense a share in them; that is, they are made by him prophets, priests, and kings; prophets to teach and instruct others, having received the anointing from him; and kings and priests unto God and his Father (1 John 1:2, 7; Rev. 1:6).

3. Much of fellowship with Christ is enjoyed in

the use of, and by the means of the ordinances of his house, especially the ordinance of the Supper. The church is a banqueting house, into which Christ brings his people, where they sit under his shadow, and in his presence, with delight, and his banner over them is his love displayed; here he has a table spread, and at it he himself sits, and welcomes his guests, saying, "Eat, O friends! drink abundantly, O beloved!" which encourages them, and causes their "spikenard to send forth the sweet smell" thereof, or their graces to go forth in exercise on him; so that the communion is mutual; he sups with them, and they with him. Now this communion with Christ greatly arises from the saints relation to him; he is the Husband of his church and people, and they are his spouse and bride; hence a communion both of name and goods; they have the same common name, "The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6; 33:16), and all that Christ has is theirs, they being Christ's and he theirs; he is made to them "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30; 3:21-23). Christ is the head, to which his body, the church, is joined, and the saints are members of him, and one Spirit with him; from whom they receive life and nourishment, and increase with the increase of God: he is the vine, they the branches; and by virtue of union to him, a communication of the fruits of grace, holiness, and perseverance therein is made to them from him.

Thirdly, saints have also a special and particular communion with the Holy Ghost, in the gifts of his grace unto them, and which they exercise under his influence; as the grace of faith, which is of his operation, and from whence he is called, "the Spirit of faith;" and a "good hope through grace," in the exercise of which believers abound, "through the power of the Holy Ghost;" and love is a fruit of the Spirit, and which is under his cultivation. Moreover, this fellowship of the Spirit appears in the offices of grace, which he performs towards them; as the guide, teacher, and comforter of them; as a Spirit of grace and supplication, making intercession in them; as a Spirit of adoption, witnessing to their spirits, that they are the children of God; and as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance to them, and the sealer of them up unto the day of redemption; in whom he dwells, as in his temple, enabling them to exercise every grace and perform every duty, working them up for that self same thing, eternal glory and happiness.

VI. The properties of it; showing the excellency of this communion and fellowship.

1. It is a wonderful instance of condescension in God; that he who is the high and lofty One, who dwells in heaven, the high and holy place, and yet with such also who are of a contrite and humble spirit; that he whose throne the heaven is, and the earth his footstool, and yet condescends to dwell with men on earth; that Wisdom, or the Son of God, should build an house, furnish a table, and invite sinful unworthy creatures to partake of the entertainments of it; that Father, Son, and Spirit should come and make their abode with sinful men, and admit them to the greatest intimacy with them.

2. It is very honorable to the sons of men to be favored with such communion: if it was an honour to Mephibosheth to sit at the table of king David, as one of the king's sons; or for an Haman to be invited to a banquet with the king and queen; how infinitely more honorable is it to be admitted to sit with the King of kings at his table, and be entertained by him as royal guests!

3. This is a privilege very desirable, nothing more so; this is the one thing saints are desirous of in public worship, to behold the beauty of the Lord; to see his power and his glory in his sanctuary; to sit under his shadow, and taste his pleasant fruits. This is no other than the gate of heaven.

4. It is exceeding valuable; it is beyond all the enjoyments of life, preferable to everything that can be had on earth; the light of God's countenance, his gracious presence, communion with him, put more joy and gladness into the hearts of his people, than the greatest increase of worldly things; it is this which makes wisdom's ways of pleasantness, and her paths of peace; it is this which makes the tabernacles of God amiable and lovely, and a day in his house better than a thousand elsewhere; and because so valuable, hence the apostle John, in an exulting manner, says, "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" (1 John 1:3).

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY
BOOK II
Of External Worship, As Public.

Chapter 1

OF THE NATURE OF A GOSPEL CHURCH, THE SEAT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

Having treated of the object of worship, and distinguished worship into internal and external; and having considered internal worship as it lies in the exercise of various graces; I now proceed to consider external worship, both public and private: and first public worship; and as public worship is carried on socially in a church state, I shall begin with considering the nature of a gospel church, the seat of it. The word "church" has various significations, which it may be proper to take notice of, in order to settle the true sense of it, as now to be discoursed of.

First, some take it for a place of worship, and call such a place by that name; but wrongly, at least very improperly: it is a remarkable saying of one of the ancients, even of the second century, "Not the place, but the congregation of the elect, I call the church." [67] Indeed, any place of worship was formerly called an house of God; so the place where Jacob and his family worshipped, having built an altar for God, was called Bethel or the house of God (Gen. 35:1), so the tabernacle of Moses is called, the house of God in Shiloh (Judg. 18:31), and the temple built by Solomon, the house of the Lord (1 King 6:1, 2, 37). But neither of them are ever called a church. The papists, indeed, call an edifice built for religious worship, a church; and so do some Protestants; I might add, some dissenting Protestants too; who call going to a place of public worship, going to church; though with great impropriety. It must be owned, that some of the ancient fathers used the word in this metonymical and improper sense, for the place where the church met for worship: and some passages of scripture are pleaded for this use of it; which yet do not seem to be plain and sufficient: not Acts 19:37 for the word ierosulous, should not be rendered "robbers of churches," but "robbers of temples;" and design not edifices built for Christian worship; but the temples of the heathens, as that of Diana, at Ephesus: but what may seem more plausible and pertinent, are some passages in 1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 22. "When ye come together in the church I hear," &c. which is thought to be after explained; "When ye come together into one place:--have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God?" All this, indeed, supposes a place to meet in; though rather not the place, but the assembly that met in it, is called the church; and their coming together in the church may intend no other than some of the members coming and meeting together with the rest of the church; and epi to auto, which we render "into one place," may design, not the unity of the place, but the unanimity of the people in it: nor is the opposition between their own houses and the place of meeting; and this is only mentioned to show that it would have been much more suitable and decent in them to have eat and drank in their own houses, than in the presence of the assembly and church of God, which was to their scandal, reproach, and contempt; for not the place, but the people that met in it, were properly the object of contempt: however, it is certain, that there are numerous places of scripture which cannot be understood of any material edifice or building; whether of stone, brick, or wood [68] ; as when it is said, "tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church," (Acts 11:22) it would be absurd to understand it in such a sense; and so many others.

Secondly, the word ekklesia, always used for "church," signifies an "assembly" called and met together [69] , and sometimes it is used for an assembly, whether lawfully or unlawfully convened; so the people who got together, upon the uproar made by the craftsmen at Ephesus, is called, "a confused assembly," and suggested to be an unlawful one; since the town clerk told them the matter should be determined in "a lawful assembly;" and when he had thus spoken, "dismissed the assembly" (Acts 19:32, 39, 41) in which passages the same word is used which commonly is for a "church;" and which may be considered either as a general, or as a particular assembly of persons.

First, as a general assembly, called, "The general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are

written in heaven," (Heb. 12:23) and which include all the elect of God, that have been, are, or shall be in the world; and who will form the pure, holy, and undefiled Jerusalem church state, in which none will be but those who are written in the Lamb's book of life; and this consists of the redeemed of the Lamb, and is the "church" which Christ has "purchased" with his blood; and who make up his spouse, the "church" he has "loved," and given himself for, to wash, and cleanse, and present to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle; this is the "body," the church, of which Christ is the "head;" and in which he is the sole officer, being Prophet, Priest, and King of it; it being, not the seat of human government, as a particular church is: and this church is but "one," though particular churches are many: to this may be applied the words of Christ; "My dove, my undefiled, is but one," (Song 6:9) and this is what sometimes is called by divines, the "invisible" church; not but that the whole number of God's elect is visible to him, and known by him; "The Lord knows them that are his;" and the election of particular persons may be known by themselves, by the grace be stowed upon them; and, in a judgment of charity, may be concluded of others, that they are the chosen of God, and written in the book of life: but all the particular persons, and the number of them, were never yet seen and known; John had a sight of them in a visionary way, and they will be all really and actually seen, when the new Jerusalem shall descend from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband; which will be at the second coming of Christ, and not before; till that time comes, this church will be invisible. It is sometimes distinguished into the church "triumphant and militant," the whole family named of God in heaven and earth. The church triumphant consists of the saints in glory, whom Christ has taken to himself, to be with him where he is; and this is continually increasing. The church militant consists of persons in the present state, which is said to be, "as an army with banners," (Song 6:4) this is made up of such who become volunteers in the day of Christ's power; who put on the whole armour of God, and fight the good fight of faith; and in this state it will continue to the end of the world.

There is another sense in which the church may be said to be "catholic," or "general," as it may consist of such in any age, and in each of the parts of the world, who have true faith in Christ, and hold to him the head, and are baptized by one Spirit into one body; have one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, and are called in one hope of their calling: and this takes in, not only such who make a visible profession of Christ: but all such who are truly partakers of his grace; though they have not made an open profession of him in a formal manner; and this is the church which Polycarp called, "the whole catholic church throughout the world" [70] : and Irenaeus [71] , "The church scattered throughout the whole world to the ends of the earth:" and Origen [72] , "The church of God under heaven:" and this is the church built on Christ the rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; such a church Christ has always had and will have; and which may be, when there is no visible congregated church, or a particular church gathered according to gospel order; and of this the apostle seems to speak, when he says, "Unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). But,

Secondly, the church may be considered as a particular assembly of saints meeting together in one place for religious worship. Such was the first church at Jerusalem, which is called, the "whole church," that met together in one place at the same time (Acts 1:14, 15, 2:1, 4:32, 15:22), and the church at Antioch, convened by the apostles, to whom they rehearsed what God had done with them (Acts 14:27), and these churches, in after times, continued to meet in one place; the whole church of Jerusalem, at the destruction of the city, removed to Pella, a town beyond Jordan, which was sufficient to receive the Christians that belonged to it [73] ; and two hundred and fifty years after Christ the church at Antioch met in one house [74] . And so the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:23, 5:4), and the church of the disciples at Troas, who came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7), of these there were many in one province; as the churches of Judea, besides that at Jerusalem, and the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:2, 23), and the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4), and the churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1), the church at Cenchrea, a port of Corinth, and distinct from the church there, as were all these churches distinct

from one another; so that he that was of one church, was not of another; as Epaphras is said to be "one of you," of the church at Colosse, a peculiar member and minister of that church, and not of another (Col. 4:12). And this is the church the nature of which is to be treated of; and may be considered "essentially," as to the matter and form of it; and "organically," as to its order and power or as a body corporate, having its proper officers.

1. "Essentially" considered, as to its matter and form, of which it consists.

First, as to the matter of it, both as to quantity and quality. As to number, Tertullian [75] thought that three persons were sufficient to constitute a church; which may seem to be confirmed by Matthew 18:20 "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," &c. who may be sufficient to meet and pray together, and edify one another; but a judicial process in a church way, in case of offence, as directed to in some preceding verses, seems to require more; seeing, it the offending and offended parties cannot compromise things among themselves, one or two more are to be taken, which if two make four; if reconciliation cannot be made, the matter must be brought before the church, which must consist of a greater number than the parties before concerned; and which it should seem cannot be less than six more, and in all ten; which was the number of a congregation with the Jews [76] : and a church organically considered, or as having proper officers, seems to require more; the church at Ephesus was begun with twelve men, or thereabout (Acts 19:7), yet a church should consist of no more than can meet together in one place, where all may hear, and all may be edified; and if it should be so increased that this cannot be, then it should be divided into lesser communities; as an hive of bees, when too many, swarms; and which seems to be the case of the church at Jerusalem; which, upon the departure of those who were converted at Pentecost, and on the scattering of the church by persecution, formed several churches in Judea, and accounts for the early mention of them. But not to dwell on this, the quality of the materials of a gospel church more especially deserves attention. In general, it may be observed, that all such who are of immoral lives and conversations, and of unsound principles, as to the doctrines of the gospel, are not proper persons to be members of a gospel church; no unclean persons, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, have, or should have, any inheritance, part or portion in the kingdom of God, as that may signify, as it sometimes does, a gospel church state; and though there may be such secretly, who creep in unawares, yet when discovered are to be excluded; and such persons, therefore, who are to be put away from a church, as wicked men, and such as walk disorderly, are to be withdrawn from, and such as have imbibed false doctrines, are to be rejected; then most certainly such are not knowingly to be admitted into the original constitution of a church of Christ, or be at first received into the fellowship of one. The persons who are fit materials of a visible gospel church, are described,

1. As regenerate persons; "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit," of the grace of the Spirit of God, "he cannot enter," of right he ought not to enter, and, if known, ought not to be allowed to enter, "into the kingdom of God," into a gospel church state; none but such who are begotten again to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, and who, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word and ordinances, that they may grow thereby, having tasted that the Lord is gracious; or, in other words, of whom it is "meet to think," and, in a judgment of charity and discretion, to hope and conclude that God hath begun a "good work" in them; such were the members of the church at Philippi (Phil. 1:6, 7).

2. As called ones; a church is a congregation of such who are called out from among others, by the grace of God; both the Hebrew and Greek words qhlh and ekklesia, signify an assembly of persons called and convened together; so the members of the church at Rome are styled, "the called of Jesus Christ," (Rom. 1:6) such who are called out of the world, and from fellowship with the men of it, "into the fellowship of Jesus Christ": such who are proper materials of a gospel church, are such who are called out of a state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the law, into the liberty of the gospel; and out of darkness into marvellous light; and are called with an holy calling, and called to be saints, not merely by the external ministry of the word, to outward holiness of life and conversation, who are never effectually called by the grace of God, nor have any appearance of it, and so

unfit to be members of churches; for,

3. Such are not only called to be saints, but in and by the effectual calling become really saints, at least are judged to be so, by a charitable discretion of them; so the members of the churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, are described as "saints," and "sanctified" persons, and as "holy temples," built for habitations of an holy God; hence they are called "churches of the saints," because they consist of such; and Christ, who is King and head of the church, is called "King of saints" (1 Cor. 14:33; Rev. 15:3).

4. They are described as the "faithful in Christ Jesus," or believers in him: so in the article of the church of England a church is defined, "A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered." For only faithful men, or believers in Christ, can have fellowship with the saints in a church state; and none but such can have communion with Christ; for he dwells in the hearts of men by faith, and they live by faith upon him: and only such have a right to the ordinances of Christ, and can receive benefit by them; unless they believe with all the heart, they have no right to baptism; and unless they have faith in Christ, they cannot discern the Lord's body in the supper; nor is the gospel preached of any profit to them, not being mixed with faith; so that they are on all accounts unfit for church membership; and hence we read, that those who were joined to the first church at Jerusalem were believers (Acts 4:14, see Acts 2:41, 47). Hence,

5. Those that were added to the church at Jerusalem are said to be, "such as should be saved;" as all those who believe and are baptized, shall be saved; according to Mark 16:16. And besides, these were added by the Lord himself, as well as to him, and therefore should be saved by him with an everlasting salvation: and such who are admitted to church fellowship, should be such, who, in a judgment of charity or in charitable discretion, may be hoped, that they are the chosen of God, the redeemed of Christ, are called, sanctified, and justified, and so shall be everlastingly saved.

6. They should be persons of some competent knowledge of divine and spiritual things, and of judging of them; who have not only knowledge of themselves, and of their lost estate by nature, and of the way of salvation by Christ; but who have some degree of knowledge of God in his nature, perfections, and works; and of Christ, in his Person as the Son of God; of his proper Deity; of his incarnation; of his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King; of justification by his righteousness; pardon by his blood; satisfaction by his sacrifice; and of his prevalent intercession: and also of the Spirit of God: his person, offices, and operations; and of the important truths of the gospel, and doctrines of grace; or how otherwise should the church be "the pillar and ground of truth?"

7. The materials of a gospel church should be men of holy lives and conversations; holiness both of heart and life becomes the house of God, and those who are of it; none should have a place in it but such (see Ps. 15:1, 2, 24:3, 4).

8. Such who are admitted into fellowship with a particular church of Christ, should be truly baptized in water, that is, by immersion, upon a profession of their faith; so the three thousand penitents, after they had gladly received the word, were baptized; and then, and not before, were added to the church: so the first church at Samaria consisted of men and women baptized by Philip, they believing what he said concerning the kingdom of God: and Lydia, and her household, and the jailor and his, being baptized upon their faith, laid the foundation of the church at Philippi: and the church at Corinth was begun with persons who, hearing the word, believed, and were baptized; and the church at Ephesus was first formed by some disciples baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:5), so the members of the churches at Rome, Galatia, and Colosse, were baptized persons (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). But,

9. Not their infants with them; who were neither baptized nor admitted to membership in the churches; no one instance of either can be produced in scripture: they are not members by birth [77] ; for "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh," carnal and corrupt, and unfit for church fellowship: nor do they become such by the faith of their parents; for even their faith does not make them themselves church members, without a profession of it, and giving up themselves to a church, and received by it into it: men must be believers before they are baptized; and they must be baptized before they become members; and they cannot be members till they make application to a church, and are

admitted into it. Infants, as they are born, are not fit for membership, being unregenerate, unholy, and impure by their first birth, and must be born again ere they are fit for the kingdom of God, or a gospel church state; their federal holiness, talked of, is a mere chimera, and is unsupported by 1 Corinthians 7:14, they are not capable of understanding and of answering questions put unto them; nor of giving up themselves to a church; nor of consent and agreement to walk with it, the nature of which they are unacquainted with, and of what belongs to a member of it, either as to duty or privilege; nor are they capable of answering the ends of church communion, the mutual edification of members and the glory of God: and such who plead for their membership make a poor business of it; not treating them as members, neither by admitting them to the ordinance of the supper, nor by watching over them, reproving, admonishing, and laying them under censures, when grown up, and require them, were they members.

Secondly, a particular church may be considered as to the "form" of it; which lies in mutual consent and agreement, in their covenant and confederation with each other.

1. There must be an union, a coalition of a certain number of persons to form a church state, one cannot make a church; and these must be united, as the similies of a tabernacle, temple, house, body, and a flock of sheep, to which a church is sometimes compared, show; the tabernacle was made with ten curtains, typical of the church of God; but one curtain did not make a tabernacle, nor all the ten singly and separately taken; but there were certain loops and taches, with which they were coupled together; and being thus joined, they composed the tabernacle. Song the temple of Solomon, which was another type of the gospel church: and which was made of great and costly stones; these stones, not as in the quarry, nor even when hewed and squared, lying singly by themselves, made the temple, until they were put and cemented together, and the headstone brought in and laid on: thus truly gracious souls, though they are by grace separated from the common quarry of mankind, and are hewn by the Spirit of God, and by the ministry of the word, and are fit materials for the church of God, yet do not constitute one, until "fitly framed together," and so grow unto an holy temple of the Lord. A church is called the house of God, a spiritual house, built up of lively stones, living saints; but these, be they ever so lively and living, they do not form a church, unless they are builded together, "for an habitation of God". A church of Christ is often compared to an human body; which is not one member, but many; and these not as separate, but members one of another; who are "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth": and sometimes it is called a flock, the flock of God; and though a little flock, yet one sheep does not make a flock, nor two or three straggling ones; but a number of them collected together, feeding in one pasture, under the care of a shepherd.

2. This union of saints in a church state, is signified by their being "joined" and as it were glued together [78] (see Acts 5:13, 9:26); it is an upon of spirits so close, as if they were but one spirit; so the members of the first Christian church were "of one heart and one soul," being "knit together in love;" and it becomes members to endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Acts 4:32; Col. 2:2; Eph. 4:3).

3. This union between them is made by voluntary consent and agreement; a Christian society, or a church of Christ, is like all civil societies, founded on agreement and by consent; thus it is with societies from the highest to the lowest; kingdoms and states were originally formed on this plan; everybody corporate, as a city, is founded on the same plan; in which there are privileges to be enjoyed, and duties to be performed; and no man has a right to the one, without consenting to the other: and in lower societies, no man can be admitted into them, nor receive any benefit from them, unless he assents to the rules and articles on which the society is founded. All civil relations, except the natural relation of parents and children, which arises from the law of nature, are by consent and covenant; as that of magistrates and subjects, and of masters and servants, and of husband and wife; which latter, as it is by compact and agreement, may serve to illustrate the relation between a church and its members added to it, and the manner in which they be, by consent (see Isa. 62:5).

4. As the original constitution of churches is by consent and confederation, so the admission of new members to them, is upon the same footing: the primitive churches in the times of the apostles, "first

gave their own selves to the Lord," as a body, agreeing and promising to walk in all his commandments and ordinances, and be obedient to his laws, as King of saints; "and to us," the apostles, pastors, guides, and governors, to be taught, fed, guided, and directed by them, according to the word of God; and to one another also, "by the will of God," engaging to do whatever in them lay, to promote each other's edification and the glory of God: and so all such who were added to them, it was done by mutual consent, as it always should be; as no man is to be forced into a church, or by any compulsory methods brought into it, so neither can he force himself into one; he has no right to come into a church, and depart from it when he pleases; both the one and the other, his coming into it and departure from it, must be with consent: a man may propose himself to be a member of a church, but it is at the option of the church whether they will receive him; so Saul assayed to join himself to the disciples, that is, he proposed to be a member with them, but they at first refused him, fearing he was not a true disciple, because of his former conduct; but when they had a testimony of him from Barnabas, and perceived that he was a partaker of the grace of God, and was sound in the faith of Christ, they admitted him, and he was with them going out and coming in: and it is but reasonable a church should be satisfied in these points, as to the persons received into their communion; not only by a testimony their becoming lives, but by giving an account of what God has done for their souls, and a reason of the hope that is in them; as well as by expressing their agreement with them in their articles of faith.

5. Something of this kind may be observed in all religious societies, from the beginning, that they were by agreement and confederation; so the first religious societies in families, and under the patriarchal dispensation, it was by the agreement of families, and the common consent of them, that they met and joined together for public worship, to call on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26), so the Jewish church, though national in some sense, yet was constituted by confederation; God prescribed to them laws in the wilderness, and they covenanted and consented to obey them (Ex. 24:7), he avouched them to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God; and then, and not before, were they called a "church," (Acts 7:38) and so the gospel church was spoken of in prophecy, as what should be constituted and increased by agreement and covenant (Isa. 44:5, 56:6, 7; Jer. 50:5), all which agrees with New Testament language; from whence it appears to be fact, that it was by consent and agreement that the first churches were formed, as before observed, and not otherwise; and nothing else but mutual consent, can make a man a church member: not faith it, the heart for that cannot be known until a man declares and professes it; nor a bare profession of faith, which, though necessary to membership, does not declare a man a member of one church more than of another, nor entitle more to one than to another; unless he gives up himself to a church, and professes his desire to walk with it in a subjection to the gospel of Christ: nor baptism, though a prerequisite to church fellowship, does not make a man a member of a church, as it did not the eunuch: nor hearing the word; for men ignorant and unbelievers may come into an assembly and hear the word (1 Cor. 14:24), yea, persons may hear the word aright, have faith, and profess it, and be baptized, and yet not be church members; it is only mutual consent that makes them such: persons must propose themselves to a church, and give up themselves to it, to walk in it, in an observance of the ordinances of Christ, and duties of religion; and the church must voluntarily receive them in the Lord. And,

6. Such a mutual agreement is but reasonable; for how should "two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) and unless persons voluntarily give up themselves to a church and its pastor, they can exercise no power over them, in a church way; they have nothing to do with them that are without, they have no concern with the watch and care of them; nor are they entitled thereunto, unless they "submit themselves to one another in the fear of God;" they have no power to reprove, admonish, and censure them in a church way; nor can the pastor exercise any pastoral authority over them, except by agreement they consent to yield to it; nor can they expect he should watch over their souls as he that must give an account, having no charge of them by any act of theirs. Now,

7. It is this confederacy, consent, and agreement, that is the formal cause of a church; it is this which not only distinguishes a church from the world, and

from all professors that walk at large, the one being within and the other without, but from all other particular churches; so the church at Cenchrea was not the same with the church at Corinth, though but at a little distance from it, because it consisted of persons who had given up themselves to it, and not to the church at Corinth; and so were members of the one and not of the other; "one of you," as Onesimus and Epaphras were of the church at Colosse, and not of another (Col. 4:9, 12). From all which it follows,

8. That a church of Christ is not parochial, or men do not become church members by habitation in a parish; for Turks and Jews may dwell in the same parish: nor is it diocesan; for we never read of more churches under one bishop or pastor, though there may have been, where churches were large, more bishops or pastors in one church (Phil. 1:1), nor provincial, for we read of churches in one province; as of the churches of Judea, and of Galatia, and of Macedonia: nor national; nay, so far from it, that we not only read of more churches in a nation, but even of churches in houses (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1:2), nor presbyterian; for we never read of a church of presbyters or elders, though of elders ordained in churches; by which it appears there were churches before there were any presbyters or elders in them (Acts 14:23). But a particular visible gospel church is congregational; and even the church of England, which is national itself, defines a "visible church to be a congregation of faithful men; " and, indeed, the national church of the Jews was in some sense congregational; it is sometimes called the "congregation," (Lev. 4:13-15) they were a people separated from other nations, and peculiarly holy to the Lord; they met in one place, called, "the tabernacle of the congregation," and offered their sacrifices at one altar (Lev. 1:3, 4, 17:4, 5), and three times in the year all their males appeared together at Jerusalem; and besides, as Lightfoot [79] observes, there were stationary men at Jerusalem, who were representatives of the whole congregation, and were at the sacrifices for them: the synagogues also, though not of divine institution, were countenanced by the Lord, and bore a very great resemblance to congregational societies; and is the word which answers to "congregation" in the Septuagint version, and is used for a Christian assembly in the New Testament (James 2:2), to which may be added, that such congregations and assemblies as gospel churches be, are prophesied of as what should be in gospel times (see Eccl. 12:11; Isa. 4:5). A church of saints thus essentially constituted, as to matter and form, have a power in this state to admit and reject members, as all societies have; and also to choose their own officers; which, when done, they come a complete organized church, as to order power; of which more hereafter.

---

[67] ou ton topon, alla to athroisma ton eklektoe ekklesiae kalo, Clement. Alexandr. Stromat. l. 7. p. 715.

[68] "Ecclesia est verum templum Dei, quod non in parietibus est, sed in corde et fide hominum qui credunt in eum et vocantur fideles," Lactant. de vera sap, l. 4. c. 13.

[69] "Ecclesia, ut omnes norunt, Graeca vox est, quae apud nos coetum, concionem, congregationem----que significat hujusmodi erant particulares dictae ecclesiae, ut Laodicaea," &c. Aonii Palearii Testimonium, c. 10. p. 321

[70] Apud Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 4. c. 15.

[71] Adv. Haeres. l. 1. c. 2, and 3.

[72] Apud Euseb. l. 6. c. 25.

[73] Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5.

[74] Ib. l. 7. c. 30.

[75] Deut. Baptismo, c. 6.

[76] Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 1. s. 6.

[77] "Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani," Tertullian. Apologet. c. 18.

[78] kollasthai autois, "proprie notat glutine coadunare, &c. metaphorice designat arctiorem conjunctionem, &c. quia quae glutine coadunata sunt, arcte conjuncta sunt, tenaciterque adhaerent, ut non facile queant separari," Stockius in voce.

[79] Temple-service, ch. 7. s. 3.

Chapter 2

OF THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBER OF A CHURCH TO EACH OTHER

A church thus confederated and united by consent and agreement, there are various duties incumbent on its members; which, both for their own comfort, credit, and edification, and for the glory of God, it is

highly necessary to observe. As,

1. First, and which is a principal one, to love one another; "Owe no man anything, but to love one another," is an apostolical advice, and good advice; this is a debt which every man owes to another, and should be always paying, especially Christians and members of churches (Rom. 13:8, 12:10).

1. This is the great law of Christ, as King in his church, his royal commandment, which he enjoins on all his subjects, and frequently repeats (John 13:34, 15:12, 17).

2. The example of Christ should influence and engage unto it (John 13:34, 15:12, 1 John 3:16).

3. The relations that members of churches stand in to each other oblige to love; being fellow citizens of the same family, are brethren to each other, and make one fraternity, or "brotherhood," which they should "love," (1 Peter 2:17, 3:8) and are members one of another (1 Cor. 12:13, 25-27).

4. Mutual love is an evidence of being the disciples of Christ (John 13:35).

5. It is this which makes communion in a church state delightful and comfortable, as well as honourable; "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" it is as pleasing and refreshing as the fragrant oil poured on Aaron's head, and as the dew that fell on mount Hermon (Ps. 133:1-3), when, on the contrary, nothing is more uncomfortable and dishonourable, as well as nothing is more pernicious and ruinous to a church state, than want of love (Gal. 5:15).

This love of members one to another ought to be "fervent," and it should be "unfeigned," and without dissimulation (1 Peter 4:8, 1:22), and it should be universal, love to all the saints, weaker as well as stronger, poor as well as rich (Eph. 1:15). [80]

Secondly, it is incumbent on church members, as much as in them lies, to endeavour to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" to press to which the apostle uses various arguments in Ephesians 4:3-6.

1. Care should be taken to promote and preserve unity, of affection; so as to be of "one heart, and of one soul, having the same love," as the apostle advises to (Phil. 2:9). But this falls in much with the first duty, before inculcated.

2. There should be, as much as may be, an unity of mind and judgment in the doctrines of the gospel; being, as the apostle in the above place directs, "of one accord and of one mind;" or as he elsewhere says, that "all speak the same thing;" and that they "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," or otherwise there is danger of schism, divisions, and contentions (1 Cor. 1:10, 11).

3. And which is much the same an "unity of faith;" for there is but one faith (Eph. 4:5, 13), one doctrine of faith, or scheme and system of divine truths to be believed; and church members should "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27.

4. There should be a zealous concern for unity of worship, and that nothing be introduced into it contrary to the pattern showed and directed to in the word of God; and that they "serve the Lord with one consent, and with one mind, and with one mouth glorify God," (Zeph. 3:9; Rom. 15:6) and to prevent discord in affection, judgment, and worship, and to secure peace, all strife should be avoided, and even checked at the beginning of it; the advice of the wise man is good (Prov. 17:14), and equally good is the advice of the apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory" (Phil. 2:3). Proud and contentious men, who seek to promote strife and division, are not to be encouraged in Christian communities (1 Cor. 11:16), the peace of a church is to be laboured after by its members, and by all means to be pursued; the comfort of saints in fellowship with each other is a strong argument for peace and unity (Phil. 2:1, 2), and above all, as saints would be desirous of having the price of God with them, they should be concerned to "be of one mind, and live in peace;" and then may they expect, and not otherwise, that "the God of love and peace shall be with them" (2 Cor. 13:11).

Thirdly, it is the duty of members of churches to sympathize with each other in all conditions and circumstances they come into (Rom. 12:15), and upon this their membership with one another cannot but have a considerable influence (1 Cor. 12:26), this sympathy should be with respect to things outward and temporal; any calamity, affliction, and distress, of whatsoever kind; they "that are in bonds," especially for the sake of religion, should be remembered as "bound with them," as if in the same circumstances, and should pity and relieve them as much as may be;

and "them which suffer adversity" in body, family, or estate, "as being themselves in the body," and liable to the same adversities (Heb. 12:3), and therefore should visit, comfort, and assist them; so Job's three friends, when they heard of his afflictions in his person, family, and substance, though they lived at a distance from him, by appointment met together, "to come, to mourn with him, and to comfort him," (Job 2:11) and much more should members of churches act such a part to one another. Likewise when in inward trouble and distress of soul, through the hidings of God's face, the temptations of Satan, the weakness of grace, and the strength of corruptions; it becomes fellow members to "comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, and bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," which is the law of love and sympathy (1 Thess. 5:14; Gal. 6:2), and the sympathy of God with his people in their afflictions, and also of Christ, who is "touched with the feeling of the infirmities" of his people, should direct to such a temper and carriage (Isa. 63:9; Heb. 4:15).

Fourthly, it is the duty of church members to communicate to each other in such circumstances.

1. In outward things, to such as are in want of them (Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:10), hence in the times of the apostles, the churches had orders to make collections on the first day of the week for the poor saints, that thereby they might be relieved who were in necessitous circumstances (1 Cor. 16:1, 2), brotherly love demands such a conduct in church members to their brethren in distress; for, "how dwelleth the love of God in" such, who, having a portion of worldly things, shut up their bowels of compassion from their brethren in need? (1 John 3:17) besides, to communicate to such persons is well pleasing in the sight of God, and will be taken notice of in the great day of account when forgotten by the saints (Heb. 13:16; Matthew 25:40).

2. It is their duty to communicate in spiritual things, to mutual comfort and edification; to speak often one to another about divine things; to impart spiritual experiences, and to declare to each other what God has done for their souls; to communicate spiritual light and knowledge in the mysteries of grace; and according to the gift one has received, be it more or less, to minister it to one another, and to build up one another in their most holy faith, by Christian conference and praying together; and through the word dwelling richly in them, to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and care should be taken that no communication proceeds out of the mouth but what is for edification, and ministers grace to the hearers.

Fifthly, it is the duty of church members to watch over one another; that they do not indulge to sinful lusts and pleasures, and make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof; and so bring a reproach on the good ways of God, and the doctrines of Christ; and to warn them that are unruly, or err from the rule of the word, and recover them from any evil way they seem to be going into; as also to watch over them, lest they receive any notion contrary to the gospel of Christ; for not only pastors of churches are to watch over them for this purpose, but members of churches are to look "diligently," or act the part of a bishop or overseer in some respect, [81] "lest any man fail of the grace of God," or fall from the doctrine of grace, (Heb. 12:15) they should not suffer sin to lie upon a brother; but rebuke and admonish him for it, according to the gospel rule, first alone, and then, if such rebuke succeeds not, to do it with, and before others; and such rebukes and admonitions should be in love, and with much tenderness, as well as faithfulness; for such only are like to be kindly received, and to be successful; such that are fallen, whether into immorality or error, should be endeavoured to be restored by those who are spiritual, in the spirit of meekness (Lev. 19:17; Ps. 141:5; Gal. 6:1).

Sixthly, it is incumbent on members of churches to bear with one another; the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak; and to bear one another's burdens, and to forbear with each other, and not bear hard on one another, considering the patience, forbearance, and longsuffering of God to them; and it becomes them to forgive one another, as Christ, and God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them; and especially when repentance is declared and discovered, then forgiveness should be extended, not only to seven times, but to seventy times seven; for if we forgive not, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses (Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:12; Matthew 18:21, 22; Mark 11:26).

Seventhly, it is the duty of members of churches to pray for one another; as they have all one common

Father, who is attentive to their supplications, and is able and willing to help them in their times of need, they are directed to address him in this manner, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" and are thereby instructed to pray for others as for themselves, to whom he stands in the same relation as to themselves, even for all saints, as the apostle intimates, (Eph. 6:18 and especially for such who are in the same church state; and particularly when they are in any distress, inward or outward; and not for ministers of the gospel only; though members should never be forgetful of their own pastors, who are set over them in the Lord, that they may be fitted for their work, be assisted in it, and be made useful to their souls; but for each of the members of the church, that they may have their various wants supplied; that they may grow in grace and spiritual knowledge; be kept faithful, and preserved blameless, to the coming of Christ; it becomes them in general to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and in particular for the hill of Zion, to which they belong, that peace may be within its walls, and prosperity in its dwellings.

Eighthly, it becomes church members to separate themselves from the men of the world, and not touch persons and things which are defiling; they are in a church state, which is as a "garden inclosed;" they are a separate people, and should dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations or the people of a vain and carnal world; they are called out of the world, and therefore should not be unequally yoked with the men of it; with men unrighteous, ignorant, lawless, disobedient, dead, and profane sinners, with whom they can have no profitable communion; and, indeed, from all such in their own societies who walk disorderly they are directed to withdraw themselves.

1. In conversation they are to abstain from sinful men; not that they are to have no commerce nor correspondence with them in civil things, for then, as the apostle says, they "must needs go out of the world;" but that they are not to join with them in their sinful practices, but bear a testimony against them; they are not to walk, as other Gentiles do, in the vanity of their minds; nor to walk with them in the same paths of sin and folly; nor to keep up any intimate and familiar converse with them; knowing, that "evil communications corrupt good manners".

2. Nor should they keep company with erroneous persons, with men of unsound principles; for such, who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the gospel of Christ, are to be avoided, and their conversation shunned; and such who cavil at, and consent not unto the wholesome words of Christ, and the doctrine according to godliness, are to be withdrawn from; and such who have imbibed heretical notions, repugnant to the sacred Trinity, and to the person of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, are to be rejected; and such who bring not the doctrine of Christ with them, are not to be bid Godspeed, nor received into the houses of God's people (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 1:10, 11).

Ninthly, church members should be constant in assembling together for religious worship; it is remarked of the members of the first Christian church, to their honour, that they "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer," (Acts 2:42) that is, they constantly attended on hearing the doctrines of the apostles, which they gladly received and persevered in; and kept up their communion with them and one another, and were not missing at the Lord's Supper, and at times of public prayer; though in after times, an evil manner, a bad custom prevailed among some of those Christian Hebrews; as to "forsake the assembling of themselves together," which the apostle takes notice of to their dishonour (Heb. 10:25), a custom of bad consequence, both to communities and particular persons; for what one may do, every one may do, and in course public worship cease, and churches break up; and such a practice is very prejudicial and harmful to individuals; it is not known what may be lost by missing an opportunity or an ordinance; and what trouble and distress of soul may follow upon it, as the case of Thomas shows, who was not with the rest of the disciples when Christ first appeared to them; it is dangerous to indulge to an indifference to, and to any degree of neglect of the service of God in his house; the evil may grow, and at last issue in apostasy, as in the stony ground hearers.

Tenthly, there should be no respect of persons among members of churches in their assemblies, and when met together on church affairs, with regard to rich or poor, greater or lesser gifts; there should be no overbearing, no browbeating, nor any supercilious airs used; no affectation of superiority one over

another, they being on an equal footing, in the same relation to one another, abating the difference of offices (Matthew 20:26, 27) all the strife should be "in honour to prefer one another;" and such who are highest, with respect to spiritual gifts or worldly riches, should "condescend to men of low estates" (Rom. 12:10, 16).

Eleventhly, it behooves them to strive together for the faith of the gospel, and earnestly to contend for it; and not part with any of the truths of Christ and doctrines of grace; and should be careful to keep the ordinances as they were delivered, and not suffer any innovation in them, neither as to the matter and substance of them, nor as to the manner in which they are to be observed; and they should walk in them all with great unanimity and constancy, and should stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and not be entangled with any yoke of bondage, nor suffer any human inventions and unwarranted practices to be imposed upon them.

Twelfthly, it becomes them to be examples to each other in a holy walk and conversation, and in an observance of all the duties of religion. Holiness becomes the house of God, and the members in it; their light should shine both in the church and in the world, that others beholding their good works, may imitate them, and glorify God: they that name the name of Christ, and profess to be his, should depart from all iniquity, doctrinal and practical; they should be concerned to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, and show out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom; they should endeavour to fill up in a becoming manner all stations and relations in life, civil or economical, in the world and family; as of magistrates and subjects, of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; as well as in the church, as pastors, deacons, and private members, and be careful to perform all duties relative to them; that so their fellow members may not be grieved nor stumbled; nor the good ways of God be evil spoken of; nor the name of God, and his doctrine, be blasphemed; nor any occasion given to the adversary to speak reproachfully; and by a strict attention to these several duties of religion, they will show that they behave themselves in the house of God as they ought to do.

---

[80] Of this see more in Book 1. ch. 9.
[81] episkopounten

Chapter 3

OF THE OFFICERS OF A CHURCH, PARTICULARLY PASTORS

Having treated of a church, as "essentially" considered, with respect to its matter and form, I shall now proceed to consider it,

II. "*Organically,*" or as an organized church, a corporate body, having its proper officers. In the first churches there were officers both extraordinary and ordinary; the extraordinary officers were apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

1. "*Apostles,*" (1 Cor. 12:28). These had the "first" and chief place in the church, and the signs of the apostles were found with them: they had their call and mission from Christ, and were not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ; and as they had their mission and commission immediately from Christ, so their doctrine; they neither received it from men, nor were taught it, but had it by the revelation of Christ; they were infallibly guided into all truth by the inspiration of the Spirit, and had the power of working miracles, in confirmation of all this; they went out by authority everywhere, preaching the gospel, to the conversion of multitudes; and were the first planters of churches, which others watered; they were not limited to any particular church, but had the care of, and presided in all the churches wherever they came. This office is now ceased, the apostles have no successors in it: not such who are called lord bishops; for as the apostles had not their pompous titles, nor their grandeur, nor their wealth, so neither have these lordly bishops their gifts, power, and authority; they have neither mission nor commission, nor work similar to theirs.

2. There were set in the churches, "secondarily, prophets," (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) who had extraordinary gifts for explaining the word of God; for instruction and confirmation in the truths of it; and had the gift of tongues, to preach in them to all nations; such were in the church at Antioch, and such were Silas and Judas (Acts 13:1, 15:22), and who also had the gift of foretelling future events; as Agabus, and others, who were of great use to the churches in those

times (Acts 11:28, 21:10). This office is also no more; only the ordinary gift of interpreting the scriptures is sometimes called "prophesying," and those who have it "prophets".

3. "*Evangelists*". This name is sometimes given to the writers of the four gospels; two of which were apostles, Matthew and John; the other two, evangelists, Mark and Luke: evangelists were companions of the apostles in their travels, assistants to them in their work, and who were sent by them here and there, with messages from them to the churches, where they had been, and to finish what they had begun; for which purpose they were sometimes left in certain places; but not to reside and continue there. This office is now extinct; only that every truly gospel preacher may be called an evangelist, or evangelizer. The ordinary officers of the church are pastors and deacons, and these only; though antichrist has introduced a rabble of other officers, the scripture knows nothing of.

1. Pastors: these are shepherds under Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; who take the care of the flock, and feed it, as their name signifies; such were promised to be given under the gospel dispensation; and such Christ has given to his churches (Jer. 3:15; Eph. 4:11), and still gives; to whom he says, as he did to Peter, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," (John 21:15, 16). Who,

2. Are the same with "teachers," according to Ephesians 4:11 "Some pastors and teachers;" not "some pastors" and "some teachers," as if they were different; but "and teachers," the kai or and, being exegetical, explaining what is meant by pastors, even such who are teachers, to instruct in the knowledge of divine things; which is the pastor's work, to feed men with knowledge and understanding: and it may be observed, that in 1 Corinthians 12:28 where each of the officers of the church are enumerated, mention is made of "teachers," but "pastors" omitted, because they are the same; for they are not to be distinguished with respect to the place where they perform their work, as if the office of pastors was in the church, the flock they are to feed; but teachers or doctors in the school; whereas, it is certain, that a teacher is an officer in the church, as well as pastor (1 Cor. 12:28), nor are they to be distinguished as two distinct officers in the church, because of the subject of their ministry; the one, the pastor attending to exhortation, to things practical, and the teacher to things doctrinal, asserting, explaining, and defending the doctrines of the gospel, and refuting errors; since both belong to one and the same: if these were distinct, it should seem rather that teachers design gifted brethren, called to minister the word, but not to office power; and are only assistants to pastors in preaching, but not in the administration of the ordinances; yet it is pretty plain, that those who have a commission to teach, have also a commission to baptize, and to attend to whatsoever Christ has commanded; yea, it may be observed, that even extraordinary officers are called "teachers;" as apostles and prophets (Acts 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:7).

3. These pastors and teachers are the same with "bishops," or overseers, whose business it is to feed the flock, they have the episcopacy or oversight of, which is the work pastors are to do; which office of a bishop is a good work; and is the only office in the church distinct from that of deacon,(1 Tim. 3:1, 8; Phil. 1:1).

4. And these bishops are the same with "elders;" [82] when the apostle Paul had called together at Miletus the elders of the church at Ephesus, he addressed them as "overseers," episkopous, "bishops," (Acts 20:17, 28) and when he says, he left Titus in Crete, to ordain elders in every city, he proceeds to give the qualifications of an elder, under the name of a bishop; "A bishop must be blameless," &c. plainly suggesting, that an elder and a bishop are the same (Titus 1:5-7) and the apostle Peter exhorts the "elders," to "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight," episkopes, acting the part of a bishop, or performing the office of one (1 Peter 5:1, 2).

5. These pastors, teachers, bishops, and elders, are called rulers, guides, and governors. A pastor, or shepherd, is the governor and guide of his flock; a teacher, and a ruling elder are the same (1 Tim. 5:17). One qualification of a bishop is, that he know how to rule his own house; or how shall he take care of the church of God, to rule that well, which is a considerable branch of his office? (1 Tim. 3:1, 4, 5) these, indeed, are not to lord it over God's heritage, or rule according to their own wills, in an arbitrary manner; but according to the laws of Christ, as King of saints; and then they are to be respected and obeyed; "Remember them that have the rule over you, and obey them;" for they are over the churches

in the Lord, and under him as the great Lawgiver in his house; and though they are described as such who have the rule over churches, and are guides to them (Heb. 13:7, 17) yet they are the churches servants, for Jesus's sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

6. These are sometimes called the angels of the churches; so the pastors, elders, bishops, or overseers of the seven churches of Asia, are called the angels of the seven churches; and the pastor, elder, bishop, or overseer of the church at Ephesus, the angel of the church at Ephesus (Rev. 1:20, 2:1), so called because of their office, being sent of God, and employed by him in carrying messages of grace to the churches, and publishing the good tidings of salvation.

7. They are said to be "ministers of Christ," or his "under rowers," as the word uperetas signifies (1 Cor. 4:1), the church is the ship or boat, which they work; Christ is the pilot, who is at the helm, under whom, and by whose direction, they row; and the oars they row with are the word, ordinances, and discipline they administer. And in the same place,

8. They are called, "Stewards of the mysteries of God;" and sometimes, "Good stewards of the manifold Grace of God;" that is, of the more sublime truths of the gospel, and the various doctrines of divine grace (1 Peter 4:10) so a bishop or elder is called a "steward of God," (Titus 1:7) a steward in his house or family, to give to everyone in it their portion of meat in due season: and which office requires wisdom and faithfulness, to execute it aright (Luke 12:42; 1 Cor. 4:2). Concerning these persons may be observed,

I. The qualifications of them for their office; which, as it is a "good office," the necessary qualifications should be found in those who are put into it, and which the apostle directs to (1 Tim. 3:1; &c). Some of which,

1. Respect the internal and spiritual character and accomplishments of a bishop or elder. As,

(1). He must not be a novice; which does not mean a young man; for such an one was Timothy himself, to whom the apostle writes, who was more than an ordinary officer, even an evangelist; hence he says, "Let no man despise thy youth," (1 Tim. 4:12) but the word neophutos, translated "novice," signifies, "one newly planted," [83] that is, in the church of God; there must be time, after such a plant is planted, to observe whether it has taken good root, and how it grows and thrives, and, whether a plant of Christ's heavenly Father's planting. A bishop or elder should be first of some standing in the church, before he is called to such an office, that his gifts, grace, and conduct may be known, "lest being lifted up with pride," elated with the high station he is advanced to, and with the gifts he is supposed to have, "he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" fall by pride as he did, and under the same sentence, and be degraded from his office.

(2). He must have a competency of knowledge and understanding in divine things; for a pastor is to feed men with knowledge and understanding; and therefore must have a good share of it himself, that so he may be "able to teach others also," (2 Tim. 2:2) this is a principal part of his work, to teach and instruct men in the knowledge of evangelical truths; in which he should be assiduous; "He that teacheth, on teaching," (Rom. 12:7) and for this he must have a ministerial gift; which is not natural parts, nor human learning, nor grace in common with other Christians; which, though all needful and useful, yet neither of them separately, nor all together, will qualify a man to be a public teacher of the word. He must have a special and peculiar gift from Christ; such as he received at his ascension, and gives to men, to ordinary ministers of the word; and it was according to the measure of such a gift, though a large one, the apostle Paul himself was made a minister of the gospel, and to such a gift he ascribes his being one (Eph. 3:7, 8, 4:7, 8).

(3). He must not only be able to teach, but he must be "apt to teach;" which aptitude lies in a good degree of elocution, and a free utterance of speech; for it is of little avail what is a man's capacity, what the thoughts of his mind, and what stock of knowledge he has, unless he can clothe his ideas with proper words to convey the understanding of them to others; the royal preacher "sought to find out acceptable words;" such as were suitable to express his meaning, and to give delight and pleasure, as well as yield profit to them that heard him; and especially the taught words of the Holy Ghost are to be made use of. Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, well versed in them, and which greatly improved his gift of elocution; a good textuary makes a good preacher; a free and ready utterance is necessary; such an one is like the scribe and householder (Matthew 13:52). The

apostle Paul himself desired the Ephesians to pray for him, "that utterance might be given him," (Eph. 6:19).

2. There are other qualifications of a bishop or pastor, which respect his domestic character. He must be "the husband of one wife": this does not oblige a bishop or elder to be a married man; nor restrain from a second marriage after the decease of his wife; only that he should have but one wife at a time. Polygamy having been much in use among Jews and Gentiles, the first Christians were not easily brought off of that practice; however, the apostle thought fit to enjoin that a bishop or pastor should not practise it, that he might not set an example of it, which might serve to countenance and continue it; there were some peculiar laws respecting the marriage of the high priest among the Jews, and by which it seems he was to have but one wife (Lev. 21:13, 14), and much the same laws are directed to for priests or ministers of the word, under the gospel dispensation (Ezek. 44:22) also a bishop or elder must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," or reverence of him; obedient to his commands, and who behave respectably to him; and especially he should be careful to lay his commands upon them to keep the ways of the Lord, and to restrain them from vices, and severely reprove them for them; in which good old Eli was deficient, and therefore blamed and corrected for it: the apostle gives a good and strong reason why a bishop or elder should have this qualification; "For," says he, "if a man know not how to rule his own house," or family, "how shall he take care of the house of God?"

3. There are other qualifications, which respect his personal character, conduct, and behaviour. As,

(1). That he must be "blameless" in his conversation. Song the priest under the law were to have no blemish on them, nor any natural defect in them (Lev. 21:17-23), though they were men encompassed with moral infirmities. And this rule, respecting a bishop or pastor of a church, does not imply that he must be perfect and without sin, only that he should not be guilty of any scandalous sin, and especially should not live in any known sin; otherwise there is no man, not the best of men, without sin; no, not in the highest office; the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, were men of like passions with others.

(2). Such an one must be "of good behaviour, and must have a good report with them that are without;" he should have a good report of all men, as Demetrius had; not only of the church and its members, of those that are within, to whom he is to be "an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," (1 Tim. 4:12) but of those without the church, the men of the world; that the ministry be not blamed and had in contempt, the ways of God, and doctrines of Christ, evil spoken of, and the ministers usefulness to the souls of men hindered.

(3). He must not be given to any vice; "Not given to wine," that is, to excessive drinking of it; otherwise it is no more criminal to drink that than to drink water; and Timothy is advised by the apostle to refrain from drinking water, and to make use of wine for his health's sake (1 Tim. 5:23), or given to quarrels; he must be "no striker," neither with his fist nor with his tongue; no calumniator, no "brawler," not litigious and contentious; but "patient," and bear all reproaches, indignities, and insults; "not greedy of, nor given to filthy lucre," should not enter on his work and take upon him such an office, with a lucrative view; nor be "covetous," but "given to hospitality;" not insatiably desirous of wealth and riches, and making use of any unlawful way to obtain them; but should, according to his abilities, be liberal in relieving the poor and necessitous; and in entertaining Christian strangers and travellers, when well recommended; and by all this set a good example to others; and for which he should be supplied by the church to whom he ministers.

(4). A bishop, elder, or pastor, should be "vigilant;" watch over himself and his flock, and take heed to both: to himself; to his doctrine, that it be sound, pure, and incorrupt, and according to the word of God; and to his conversation, that it be as becomes the gospel of Christ; to his flock, to feed them with wholesome food, to lead and direct them to good pastures, and to preserve them from wolves, from false teachers, that lie in wait to deceive; he is to watch for the souls of men, for their spiritual good and welfare, as one that must give an account with joy, and not with grief; and he should be "sober" and modest, wise and prudent, and "think soberly of himself," (Rom. 12:3). I proceed to consider,

II. How any come into such an office, and are instated into it.

First, there must be a call to the ministry of the word, both inward and outward, previous to this office; no man, under the law, "took to himself the honour" of the priest's office, but he that was "called of God, as was Aaron," (Heb. 5:4, 5) nor ought any man to take upon him the office of a prophet, or minister of the word, without a call; there were some in the times of Jeremiah complained of by the Lord, who were not sent nor spoken to by him; and yet "prophesied" (Jer. 23:21).

1. An internal call; which lies in gifts bestowed, and in the furniture of a man's mind, and in the disposition of it to make use of them in the service of God; for God never calls a man to any service but he gives him abilities for it; which, when a man is sensible of, and is satisfied God has bestowed a gift upon him, he cannot be easy to wrap up his talent in a napkin, but is desirous of making use of it in a public manner; not by a mere impulse, through vanity of mind, and with ambitious views, and sordid ends; but from a principle of love to the souls of men, and to the glory of God; this is the internal call, of which a man's gifts are an evidence to himself and others.

2. The outward call is not immediately by Christ, as the twelve disciples were called, and sent forth by him to preach the gospel; and particularly, as the apostle Paul was called to be an apostle; not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, but mediately by the church; it being by some means or another made known to the church, that such an one is thought to have a gift for public usefulness, the church calls him to exercise it before them, and submit it to their examination and trial; and having sufficiently tried it, and being satisfied of it, the church calls and sends him forth in the name of Christ, to preach the gospel, where he may be directed in providence to do it; and being thus called and sent forth, he is eligible to the office of a pastor of a church who shall think fit to choose him.

Secondly, the procedure of instating him into the office of a pastor, or the ordination of him, is in this manner.

1. He must be a member of a church, to whom he is to be ordained as a pastor. Song an extraordinary officer, an apostle, was chosen and ordained to be one, in the room of Judas, from among the disciples who had accompanied Christ and his apostles from the baptism of John; and so inferior officers, deacons, were selected out of the church, and appointed to that office (Acts 1:21-23, 6:3, 5), so Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ for the church at Colosse, is said to be "one of you," a member of that church (Col. 1:7, 4:12) one that is not a member of the church, cannot be a pastor of it.

2. His qualifications, such as before observed, must be known by the members of a church, and must be proved and approved of by them; yea, they must be satisfied that be has gifts for "their" edification; for a man may have gifts for the edification of one church, which are not for the edification of another; and this should be known, previous to their choice and call of him.

3. After sufficient trial and due consideration of his gifts, to satisfaction, and after seeking the Lord by prayer, for everything is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, the church proceeds to the choice and call of him to be their pastor; for every church has a right and power to choose its own officers, pastors, and deacons.

4. This choice and call being signified to him, he taking proper time, anti seeking the Lord also, accepts thereof, and shows a readiness and willingness to take the "oversight" of them (1 Peter 5:2), for there must be a mutual consent and agreement in this affair.

5. To the public instating of him into his office, it is necessary there should be a recognition and repetition both of the church's choice and call of him, and of his acceptance of it, for the confirmation thereof, and for the satisfaction of ministers, and churches in communion; who meet to see their order, and to assist, especially the former, by prayer for them, and by giving a word of exhortation to them, if desired.

6. As every civil society has a right to choose, appoint, and ordain their own officers; as all cities and towns corporate, their mayors or provosts, aldermen, burgesses, &c. so churches, which are religious societies, have a right to choose and ordain their own officers, and which are ordained, autois, "for them," and for them "only;" that is, for each particular church, and not another (Acts 14:23).

7. The election and call of them, with their acceptance, is ordination. The essence of ordination lies in the voluntary choice and call of the people, and in the voluntary acceptance of that call by the

person chosen and called; for this affair must be by mutual consent and agreement, which joins them together as pastor and people. And this is done among themselves; and public ordination, so called, is no other than a declaration of that. Election and ordination are spoken of as the same; the latter is expressed and explained by the former. It is said of Christ, that he "ordained twelve," (Mark 3:14) that is, he chose them to the office of apostleship, as he himself explains it (John 6:70; see Acts 1:2). Paul and Barnabas are said to "ordain elders in every church," (Acts 14:23) or to choose them; [84] that is, they gave orders and directions to every church, as to the choice of elders over them; for sometimes persons are said to do that which they give orders and directions for doing, as Moses and Solomon, with respect to building the tabernacle and temple, though done by others; and Moses particularly is said to choose the judges (Ex. 18:25), the choice being made under his direction and guidance. The word that is used in Acts 14:23 is translated chosen, 2 Corinthians 8:19, where the apostle speaks of a brother, cheirotouetheis, "who was chosen of the churches to travel with us;" and is so rendered when ascribed to God (Acts 10:41).

8. This choice and ordination in primitive times, was made two ways; [85] by casting lots and by giving votes, signified by stretching out of hands. Matthias was chosen and ordained to be an apostle in the room of Judas, by casting lots; that being an extraordinary office, required an immediate interposition of the divine Being; a lot being nothing more nor less than an appeal to God for the, decision of an affair. But ordinary officers, as elders and pastors of churches, were chosen and ordained by the votes of the people, expressed by stretching out their hands; thus it is said of the apostles (Acts 14:23) "When they had ordained them elders in every church," cheirotonesantes, by taking the suffrages and votes of the members of the churches, shown by the stretching out of their hands, as the word signifies; [86] and which they directed them to, and upon it declared the elders duly elected and ordained. Song Clemens Romanus, who lived at the latter end of the apostolic age, says, [87] the apostles appointed proper persons to the office of the ministry, "with the consent or choice of the whole church;" and this practice continued to the third century; in which century Cyprian [88] was chosen bishop of Carthage, by the suffrage of the people; and so he says [89] was Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in the same age; as was Fabianus, before him: [90] the council of Nice, in the beginning of the fourth century, in their synodical epistle, [91] to the churches in Egypt, ordered, that when any were removed by death, their places should be filled up by others, provided they were worthy, and such as the people chose; the bishop of Alexandria agreeing to and confirming the choice: in the same century Martin was chosen bishop of Tours, by a vast concourse of the people: [92] indeed, the council at Laodicea, Can. XIII. in this century, ordered, that from thenceforward the people should not be allowed to choose their own ministers; which shows it had been practised before: yea, after, in the "fifth" century, Austin, in his old age, recommended to the people Eradius [93] , to be his successor; which they showed their approbation of by their loud and repeated acclamations. [94] But,

9. Though there was cheirotonia, "a stretching out of the hands;" yet there was no cheirothesia, "imposition of hands," used at the ordination; neither of extraordinary officers, as apostles; nor of ordinary pastors or elders of churches, in the times of Christ and his apostles.

1. Christ ordained the twelve apostles himself; but we read not a word of his laying his hands upon them, when he ordained them; nor on the seventy disciples, when he appointed them, and sent them forth into every city. Matthias was chosen and ordained an apostle in the room of Judas, upon a lot being cast by the church, which fell upon him; and upon counting the lots he was numbered, sunkatepsephisthe, "chosen," or by the number of lots declared to be chosen, and so took his place, and was reckoned with the apostles; but no mention is made of any hands being laid on him (see Acts 1:22-26).

2. The apostles are said to "ordain elders in every church," not by laying their hands upon them, but by taking the votes of the people, on the stretching out of their hands; when they declared the elders duly elected and ordained, as before observed. The apostle Paul directed Titus (Titus 1:5), to "ordain elders in every city;" that is, in such sort and manner as he and Barnabas had done in the above instance; but gave him no orders and instructions to lay hands upon them; which he would not have omitted, had it been

material, and so essential to ordination as some make it to be: and if he was to ordain elders by the laying on of his hands, then not by the hands of a presbytery, since he was a single person; and if this was to be done by him as a bishop, which some say he was, though the subscription of the epistle to him not being genuine, which asserts it, is no proof of it, it would justify ordination by a diocesan bishop.

3. No instance can be given of hands being laid on any ordinary minister, pastor or elder, at his ordination; nor, indeed, of hands being laid on any, upon whatsoever account, but by extraordinary persons; nor by them upon any ministers, but extraordinary ones; and even then not at and for the ordination of them. The instance in Acts 13:1-3 is no proof of laying on of hands at the ordination of a pastor or elder of a church; Paul and Barnabas were extraordinary persons, apostolical men, and were never ordained pastors or elders to any particular church; nor is there the least hint given of any such ordination of them at that time; nor was this the first time of the separation of them to the sacred office of the ministry: they had been in it, and had exercised it long before, and in as public a manner as afterwards: and what they were now separated to was some peculiar and extraordinary work and service [95] the Holy Ghost had for them to do in foreign parts, whither they travelled; and the persons who were directed by him to separate them to it, were extraordinary ones also; and their, prayers for them, with the rite of imposition of hands, seem only to express their good wishes for a prosperous success in their work [96] : and it may be observed, that this rite was used, not "at," but "after" the separation of them to the work and service into which they were appointed, and after fasting and prayer for them: this was the last act done, just when upon their departure; for so it is said, "And when they had fasted and prayed," kai epithentes tas cheiras autois, "then putting hands upon them, they sent them away," or dismissed them with this token, or sign of their good wishes for them. The apostle Paul, indeed, speaks of the hands of the presbytery being laid upon Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14), but it should be observed, that Timothy was an extraordinary officer in the church, an evangelist, and was not chosen or ordained a pastor of any particular church; nor did he reside in anyone place for any length of time; the subscription of the "second" epistle to him being not to be depended upon as genuine, no more than of that to Titus [97] ; and therefore he can be no instance of imposition of hands at the ordination of any ordinary, elder, or pastor of a church; and who the presbytery were who laid hands on him, be it upon what account it may, they must be extraordinary persons through whose hands an extraordinary gift was conveyed: we are sure the apostle Paul was one, since he expressly speaks of a gift which Timothy had "by the putting on of his hands;" and it can scarcely be thought that any other should join with herein but an apostolical man; very probably Silas (see Acts 16:1, 19). However, upon the whole, it appears to be an extraordinary affair transacted by extraordinary persons, on an extraordinary one, and by it an extraordinary gift was conveyed; which no man of modesty will assume to himself a power of conveying: And let it be observed, it was not an "office," but a "gift," which was conveyed this way (see 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

4. The hands of ministers being now empty, and they having no gifts to convey through the use of this rite, of course it ought to cease, and should; it not appearing to have been used but by extraordinary persons on any account; upon which, at least for the most part, if not always, extraordinary things followed.

5. To say that this rite is now used at the ordination of a pastor to point him out to the assembly, is exceeding trifling: the church needs it not, having before chosen and called him, and he having accepted their call in a more private way: and it is needless to others met together publicly to observe the order of the procedure; since usually the members of the church are desired to recognize their choice and call of their pastor, and he is desired to renew his acceptance, and frequently he makes a confession of his faith; and after all this, to use this rite to point him out to the people, is such a piece of weakness for which no excuse can be made.

Should it be urged, that imposition of hands was used at the ordination of deacons, and then why not at the ordination of elders or pastors of churches, which is an higher office? It may be answered, that the church, as directed, chose out from among them seven men, so and so qualified (Acts 6:1-7), in which choice the essence of ordination lay; whom they presented to

the apostles, who, approving their choice, confirmed it, and "constituted" and settled them in their office, as they proposed (Acts 6:3), and the rite of imposition of hands was used after this, and even after prayer for them; for it is said, "When they had prayed," not while they were praying, as the custom is now, "they laid their hands on them;" which, done for what end soever, was done by extraordinary persons, the apostles, and it may be for extraordinary service; and so no rule to ordinary ministers in the ordination of persons to an ordinary office; and it may be, it was done by way of benediction, wishing them happiness and success in their office, for which this rite was used among the Jews, and for the confirmation of this office, it not being the immediate institution of Christ, but of the apostles: [98] and the use of it seems to be temporary, since we have no other instance of it on such an account; nor any injunction of it, nor any direction for it; nor is it made mention of by the apostle, when he treats of the office of deacons, their qualifications, the proving and instalment of them into their office, and their use of it (1 Tim. 3:10), nor does it appear that there was afterwards any ordination of deacons, by imposition of hands, until the fourth century, when church offices and church officers were both magnified and multiplied. Besides, if the seven persons spoken of in Acts 6:1-6 were "extraordinarily" and "pro tempore" appointed to take care of the poor, and of the widows in the first church at Jerusalem, and particularly of the Grecian widows in it, to answer their present exigency; and were different from the ordinary deacons of the churches, afterwards spoken of in Paul's epistles, which is the sense of Vitringa [99] who observes, that these men are never called "deacons," only described by their number the "Seven," as in Acts 21:8 that their work was not similar to that of ordinary deacons, their "ministration" being not monthly, nor weekly, but daily, and of an extraordinary kind; for they succeeded the apostles in the care of the secular affairs of the church; they had all the estates, and the whole substance of the community, which was made one common stock in their hands, to dispose of to them as they needed; which was a very extraordinary and uncommon piece of service; though their destination was more peculiar to the care of the Grecian widows; and these seven men appear by their names to be all of them Greeks, or Jewish proselytes from the Greeks, as one of them most certainly was; and had it not been for the murmuring of the Greeks, no such appointment would have been made; nor does it appear that they continued in their office, but when this was over, it ceased; and some of them, at least, were afterwards employed in other ministerial services, and elsewhere: now if this was the case, which is not easy to be disproved, we have no scripture instance of the imposition of hands at the ordination of ordinary deacons; nor any instruction and direction for it. I go on to consider,

III. The work of such persons, who are instated into the office of pastors of churches.

First, the chief and principal of their work is to feed the church of God committed to their care; they have the name of pastors, "a pascendo," from feeding; Christ the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, feeds his flock like a shepherd; and so it is the business of all under shepherds to feed their respective flocks (1 Peter 5:2).

I*st*, whom they are to feed.

1. Not dogs that worry the flock; but the flock itself. The "childrens' bread," that which is fit and suitable food for them, is not to be taken and "cast to dogs;" that which is holy is not to be given to them; the holy word of God, its precious truths and promises, do not belong to them; nor are the holy ordinances to be administered to them; "without are dogs," they are without the church, out of the flock, and so do not belong to the care and feeding of the pastors or shepherds.

2. Nor swine; such who for the impurity of their hearts and lives, wallowing in the filth of sin, are comparable to these creatures; and which are creatures that never look upwards, but downwards to the earth, and so fit emblems of those who mind earth and earthly things, and feed on them. The prodigal was sent by the citizen of the country, the legal preacher, to whom he joined himself, into his fields to feed swine; but pastors of churches are not swineherds, but shepherds.

3. Nor the world's goats; the Lord judges and distinguishes between cattle and cattle, the sheep and the goats; though these are sometimes folded together, he threatens to punish the goats, which will be done at the second coming of Christ, when he will divide the sheep from the goats, and set the one on his right

hand and the other on his left; when the latter shall go into everlasting punishment, and the former into life eternal.

4. They are Christ's sheep and lambs, that pastors of churches are to feed, according to the directions given by Christ to Peter; "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," (John 21:15-17) such whom Christ has an interest and property in, through the Father's gift of them to him, and through his laying down his life for them (John 10:15, 29), and which is an argument why pastors should be careful and diligent to feed them, because they are Christ's; "My lambs, my sheep;" both are to be fed; the tender lambs, otherwise newborn babes, little children, as well as the grown sheep, otherwise young men and fathers. Christ, the great Shepherd, has set an example of diligence and tenderness (Isa. 40:11). So that,

5. All the flock, the whole flock, is to be taken heed unto, and taken care of by pastors and shepherds, "over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, or bishops;" and for which reason they should be careful of them; and another follows, "to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood;" and therefore of great value and great care should be taken of it to feed it.

2dly, what they are to feed the church or flock of God with?

1. Not with chaff and husks, or what is comparable to them (Jer. 23:28), chaff is light, has no substance in it, and yields no nourishment, and is not fit for food; as bread made of wheat is, and denotes the solid and substantial doctrines of the gospel, with which the souls of men are to be fed. Husks are food for swine, but not for sheep; the externals of religion satisfy some minds, but not truly gracious souls, they cannot live upon these.

2. Pastors of churches are to feed their flocks with such food as is suitable to lambs and sheep; milk is for tender lambs, for newborn babes, who desire the sincere milk of the word. Milk designs the more plain and easy truths of the gospel, which are suited to tender minds; strong meat, the more sublime doctrines of it, fitter for those of full age, more grown Christians, who have a better exercise of their spiritual senses, and can discern things that differ (1 Peter 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:14).

3. Sound doctrine, salutary truths, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, are what pastors are to teach and feed souls with; these are nourishing, when unsound doctrines, the unwholesome words of false teachers, eat as do a canker.

4. The word of God in general, and especially the gospel part of it, is food for souls, and is esteemed by them more than their necessary food; being that to their souls, what the richest and choicest food is to their bodies; they find it and eat it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; it is sweeter to their taste than the honey or the honeycomb.

5. Pastors are promised and given to the churches, to feed them "with knowledge and understanding," (Jer. 3:15) which may denote both the matter they are to feed them with, and the manner in which they are to do it.

1. The matter or things they are to feed souls with, are things worthy to be known; not trifling things, matters of curiosity, and of no importance, which are vain and unprofitable, and serve to gender strife, and tend not to godly edification: not philosophy and vain deceit, or science falsely so called; nor mere human knowledge, or knowledge of natural things; but divine knowledge, knowledge of divine things; which, though a minister cannot give; he may teach and instruct; for it is the Lord that gives understanding in all things; it is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation who leads men into the knowledge of Christ; and it is the Son of God himself who gives men an understanding to know him that is true; yet ministers are instruments of bringing men into an acquaintance with divine things, and of their improvement in the knowledge of them; the light of divine truths shines in their hearts, that they may be able to communicate, in a ministerial way, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," of the glory of his divine perfections, displayed "in the face or person," and in the work and office "of Jesus Christ". Their work is to preach Christ, and him crucified; and they determine to know, that is, to make known, none but him, as the Saviour of lost sinners; and they are the servants of the most high God, which show unto men the way of salvation by Christ; and direct souls to him, who inquire, What shall we do to be saved? yea, they may be said "to give knowledge of salvation," as John the Baptist is said to do, being instruments of conveying the knowledge of it to men; so likewise they feed

men with the knowledge and understanding of gospel truths; as they have knowledge of the mysteries of Christ themselves, they impart it to others; as they have freely received, they freely give, and keep back nothing that may be profitable, but declare the whole counsel of God; and such knowledge is food to the mind as bread is to the body.

2. This phrase, "With knowledge and understanding," may signify the manner in which pastors are to feed the souls of men, wisely and prudently; which they do when, as wise and faithful stewards, they give to everyone their portion of meat in due season, and feed them in proportion to their age and capacity; give milk to babes, and meat to strong men.

Thirdly, by what means they are to feed and do feed the churches of Christ, over which they are set.

1. By the ministry of the word, or by the preaching of the gospel; which is the means appointed of God for the gathering in his elect ones, for the perfecting the number of them in conversion, and for the edification of the body, the church, and all its members; for their growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, and of all divine things: an unpreaching pastor, bishop, or elder, is a contradiction in terms; and such are like those described by the prophet as blind and ignorant watchmen, dumb dogs that cannot bark, shepherds that cannot understand; who everyone look for their gain from their quarter, though they do not the duty of their office. But,

(1). Such feed the flock, who do their work aright; give themselves up to the ministry of the word, neglect all other services, at least as much as may be, that they may not be entangled with them, and be diverted by them, from their grand employment; to which they have devoted themselves, for the glory of God and the good of souls. Such give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine; and meditate on these things, and give themselves wholly to them, that their profiting may appear to all, and their usefulness to many.

(2). They addict themselves to the study of the sacred scriptures more particularly; and endeavour to bring forth from thence things new and old, which may be for the use of edifying; they study to show themselves approved of God, skilful workmen, who need not be ashamed of their ministrations, rightly dividing the word, which will not fail of feeding, more or less, the souls of men; as they have the word of God, the knowledge and experience of it, they are faithful to dispense it as stewards of the mysteries of God; of whom it is required, that they be both faithful and wise.

(3). They are assiduous and constant in this work; they, as the apostles of Christ, give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word; do not preach a sermon only now and then, but preach the word constantly, and are instant in season and out of season; and take every opportunity of feeding and of doing good to the souls of men; they are constant and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

(4). They not only give themselves up to this work, and are studious and constant in it, but labour therein; they are not loiterers, but labourers in the Lord's vineyard; and are labourers together with him, and are approved by him; and their labours are blessed and succeeded among men, and they receive honour from them, of which they are worthy (1 Tim. 5:17).

(5). They are careful to preach the pure and whole gospel of Christ; they study a consistence in their ministry, that it be not yea and nay, and contradict itself; they are not of them who corrupt the word with human doctrines and the inventions of men; but speak it with all sincerity, renouncing all arts of dishonesty, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; keeping back no part of divine truths, but declaring the whole of what is revealed in the word of God, so far as they have knowledge of it; and such are more or less blessed for the feeding the flock and church of God.

2. Pastors of churches feed souls by the administration of ordinances; these are the goodness and fatness of the house of God, with which the saints are richly fed, and abundantly filled and satisfied; these are the provisions of Zion, which the Lord blesses; these are breasts of consolation, out of which gracious souls suck, and are delighted and refreshed; these are green pastures, into which the shepherds of Israel lead their flocks and feed them.

3. This act of feeding includes the whole work, and every part of the work of a shepherd or pastor to his flock, doing all good offices to them, and all the

service they can for them; such as seeking the lost sheep, bringing again that which was driven away, binding up that which was broken, and strengthening the sick (Ezek. 34:16), preserving them from the lion and the bear, and from grievous wolves, false teachers, who will not spare the flock; watching over them even in the night seasons, when needful; watching for their souls, the good and welfare of them, as those who must give an account of them; being diligent to know the state of the flock, and ready to administer all relief to them in their power, by comforting the feeble minded, and supporting the weak.

4. A concern for the spiritual good of the flock the pastor has the care of, appears by his constant, fervent, and earnest prayers for it; for this is one part of the work they give themselves up unto, along with the ministry of the word, namely, prayer; particularly for those to whom they minister, that the word preached by them might be blessed unto them, and be food for their souls; thus we find the apostle Paul, in all his epistles, makes mention of his prayers for all the churches, and the members of them, he having the care of all the churches on him.

5. Pastors may feed the souls of men under their care, not only by their public ministrations, but by their private visits, counsels, instructions, and conversation; so the apostle Paul taught from house to house as well as publicly (Acts 20:20).

6. To all which, love to Christ and to his people is requisite; such only who have a true affection for both, will naturally care for the good of immortal souls, will be willing to spend and be spent for them, and to bear the reproach, and go through the fatigue and trouble which attend such service; hence said Christ to Peter, once, twice, and thrice, "Lovest thou me?" and at each answer given to the question, enjoined him to feed his lambs and his sheep; suggesting, that only such who loved him were proper persons to take the care of them.

Secondly, another part of the work of pastors, is to rule the church they take the oversight of; the same word in the Greek language which signifies to feed, signifies to rule also (see Matthew 2:6); and kings are sometimes called shepherds; as Cyrus and others; so Agamemnon, in Homer [100] , is called, poimen laon, "the shepherd of the people". The church of Christ is a kingdom; it is frequently called so in the New Testament; Christ is King of it, set as King of Zion by his divine Father, and is owned as King of saints by his church and people; and ministers of the word, and pastors of churches, are "over them in the Lord;" they are under Christ, and subject to him, but are over the churches by his appointment; hence they are represented as guides, governors, and rulers, as before observed; and obedience to them is required; "Obey them that have the rule over you," (Heb. 13:17). And their pre-eminence in the church appears,

1. In giving the lead in divine worship, they go before the congregation in acts of divine service, in public prayer and thanksgiving, and in the ministry of the word (Rev. 4:9, 10, 5:14), and this they do in an authoritative way; they are the mouth of the people to God, and present their prayers and thanksgivings as representing them; and they are the mouth of God to the people, and speak in his name, and are ambassadors in Christ's stead.

2. In presiding at church meetings; where they have the conducting of all affairs with order and decency, directing in all acts of discipline, according to the word of God; putting up the votes of the church, giving admonitions, and passing censures, as they may be necessary, by the agreement and consent of the church.

3. In receiving and rejecting members; the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel church, as usually understood, are committed to them, to open and shut the doors of the church according to its direction; for though the power of admission and rejection of members is originally in the church, it is executively in the pastors, in the name of the church.

4. In taking care of the whole discipline of the church of God, that it is observed, and that the rules respecting it are put into execution; which they are to explain, enforce, and see that they are attended to; they are to show to the house, the church of God, "the form of the house, and the fashion of it;" the nature of it, as to matter, form, power, and order; "and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof;" the rules respecting the reception of members, and the excommunication of them; "and all the ordinances, and all the laws thereof," even everything Christ has commanded and appointed to be observed (Ezek. 43:10, 11). Now the rule and government of pastors of churches is not to be exercised in an arbitrary way;

they are not to rule with force and cruelty, as the shepherds of Israel are complained of; they are not to lord it over God's heritage; they have not dominion over their faith, nor the command of their practice at their wills; they cannot oblige them to receive a doctrine, nor to follow a practice, that is of their own or of human invention: but they are to govern according to the word of God, and the laws and rules which Christ, as King and Head of the church, has given: and when they rule according to these, they may be said to rule well, and should be respected and obeyed, and counted worthy of honour. And this ruling, as well as feeding, should be with knowledge and understanding, in a wise, prudent, and discreet manner; as David, who fed the people of Israel according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with the skilfulness of his hands. I proceed to answer,

IV. Some queries relative to the office of pastors.

First, Whether a pastor of one church can officiate as such in another church; or whether he can administer the Lord's Supper, which is a pastoral act, in and to a church of which he is no pastor. I answer, he cannot; that is, it is not lawful for him to do it. As well may it be asked, Whether the lord mayor of London, whose power as such may be thought to be as extensive as any other mayor whatever, can exercise his power, in any branch of his office, in the jurisdiction of the mayor of York or of Bristol, or any other: no officer in a corporation can exercise his office in another corporation; this holds good of every officer in it, from the highest to the lowest. A church of Christ is a body corporate, in a spiritual sense; and its officers can only act as such within it, and within no other. For,

1. A man can never act as a pastor, where he is not so much as a member; a man must be a member of a church before he can be a pastor of it, as we have seen. Epaphras, the minister and pastor of the church at Colosse, the apostle Paul, writing to them says, "Who is one of you," that is, one of their society, a member of theirs (Col. 4:12). But where a man is not a member of such a society, he is not one of them; he cannot act as pastor among them, nay he cannot put forth any act or operation, or join in any act as a private member may, and much less act as a pastor; for membership is the foundation, not only of every office, but of every act and operation in a church. "All members," the apostle says, "have not the same office," (Rom. 12:4) but let the office be what it may, they must be members that have it, anti they only; they have not all the same function or ministry; as they were not all apostles who were in the primitive churches, so not all pastors, and all deacons, who were in them, and in succeeding churches; yet all who are pastors or deacons, must or should be members; and members have not all the same act or action, and operation, as the word may be rendered [101] , in an office way; though there are some acts indeed which are common to all members, yet they are such which only belong to members, and which pastors of other churches cannot act and exercise, as private members may and do: for instance, they have no vote or suffrage in other churches for the admission of a member, or for the exclusion of any; or in the choice and call of any officer, pastor or deacon: and if they cannot act, or cannot exercise an act, a private member can; then surely they can never act as a pastor, where they have not the power and privilege of a private member!

2. As one that is not a member of a church cannot be an officer in it, as a pastor of another church cannot be; then he has no office relation to it, nor has he any office power in it, and therefore cannot exercise in it any act of office power; and, in consequence, cannot administer the Lord's Supper in it, which is an act of office power.

3, As well may he exercise other branches of his pastoral office as this; as well may he be a ruling elder in other churches, and preside at their church meetings, and exercise every part of discipline, and the power of the keys, as by some called, and let in and shut out, receive and exclude members, give admonitions, lay on censures, and take them off, as a pastor, in the name of the church; and if he can act as a pastor in two churches, he may in ten, and twenty, and more, and so become a diocesan bishop; yea, an universal bishop or pastor, as the pope at Rome pretends to be; and popery stopped not until it came to that, to establish an universal pastor; and to which such an antichristian practice leads and paves the way: and it is an affectation in some to be thought of more moment and importance than they are; and to grasp at power and authority, and to appear in a character and figure which do not belong to them, if

not something else; which tempts them to give into such an unwarrantable practice. For,

4. Should it be asked, as it may be reasonably asked, by what authority they do this thing? who or what gives them this authority? What answer can be returned? will they say they have their authority from Christ? this must be had, either immediately from him, as the apostles had for what they did; and then they must be called upon to work miracles in confirmation of it, as they did: or from the word of God and Christ; and then it lies upon them to give proof of it from thence. Neither can a pastor derive his authority froth his own church, of which he is properly pastor; nor from the other, to whom, at their request, he administers the ordinance; neither the consent of the one, nor the desire of the other, can give him sufficient authority so to act: as for his own church, they invested him with office power over themselves, and not over others; further they could not and cannot go: and as for the other church, that has no power to call in the elder or pastor of another church so to act; and if they have no power to call him, he can have no authority to act, as not from his own church, so neither from that: nor will the communion of churches warrant it; for communion of churches does not enlarge the office power of a pastor, limited by the word of God to his own congregation only; this no more subjects the officers of one church to another, than it subjects the particular members of one church to another; in either of which cases there would be nothing but confusion and disorder; one church, by virtue of the communion of churches, might as well censure and cast out the members of another church; as the pastor of one church, by virtue of such communion, act as an officer in another church. Neither his grace nor his gifts can authorize him so to act; for then one that is no officer, only a private brother, might do it; nor will his being an ordained minister in one church give him authority so to act in another church; for elders are only ordained to particular churches, and not to others; the elders ordained by the apostles in every church where such ordinations were, were autois, "for them," and not others (Acts 14:23). Epaphras was a faithful minister "for you," for the church at Colosse; not for another church (Col. 1:7), the elders of Ephesus were ordered to feed all the flock over which the Holy Ghost made them overseers; but not all the flocks over which they were not overseers: so other elders are directed to feed the flock that was among them, not flocks (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2), the angel of the church at Ephesus was not angel of the church at Smyrna, and so vice versa: ordination fixes a man to a particular church or congregation: and does not make him an universal pastor, which he must be, if there was no boundary to his office. And therefore,

5. Such who take upon them to act in such a manner may be truly called, "busybodies in other mens' matters," (1 Peter 4:15) the word there translated, "a busybody," is allotrioepiskopos [102] , a bishop, in another parish or diocese, which were originally the same, or a pastor in a church, which is not his own; and truly describes such a person we are speaking of, who meddles with a business he has nothing to do with.

6. As well may a deacon of one church officiate as such in another, as a pastor of one church officiate in another; for they are both alike chosen by, and ordained to particular churches, and not to others.

7. No instance can be given of such a practice in the word of God; there may be instances of members of one church communicating with another church occasionally; so Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, was to be admitted to communicate with the church at Rome; but then partaking of an ordinance is a privilege arising from the communion of churches; and is only a kind of spiritual hospitality, giving a meal to a traveller; and that by a pastor discharging his office in his own proper place, in his own church: but the administration of an ordinance is an act of office power, which one church cannot give to another, nor a pastor exercise it in another church (Rom. 16:1, 2; see Acts 20:4-7). The instance of the apostle Paul's breaking bread to the disciples at Troas, supposing it to be understood of the ordinance of the supper, is no, proof and example of such a practice; since he was an apostle, and had the care of all the churches upon him, and could administer all ordinances unto them; but to urge and follow his example, is to usurp what is peculiar to apostles, and to confound ordinary and extraordinary ministers together as one; whereas, "Are all apostles?" They are not. Upon the whole, it may justly create a scruple in the minds of such who receive the ordinance in a church where the administrator is not a pastor: either

such an one is not clear in it, or he is, that it is his duty to receive it from such hands: if he is not clear in it, but doubts, he is self-condemned; and be it, he is clear in it, he is culpable, since hereby he approves and abets the pastor's unlawful power to administer it, and encourages him in it, and draws upon himself the guilt of his unlawful administration, and of a compliance with an authority assumed by him, but not legally given [103] .

Secondly, another question may be put upon the former, Whether a brother, or private member of a church, may be deputed by the church to administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? This may seem to carry in it a better face than the former; since, though he is a non-officer, he is upon a par with a pastor of another church, who is no more an officer in such a church the brother belongs to than he is; and besides, he is a member of the church, which the pastor of another church is not. But the ordinance of the supper cannot be administered authoritatively but by an officer, since it is an act of office power, and must be administered in the name of Christ, by one as a substitute of him; and if the church may delegate and substitute others for the discharge of all ordinances whatsoever, without elders or pastors, then it may "perfect the saints," and complete the "work of the ministry," without them; which is contrary to (Eph. 4:11, 12) and, as Dr. Owen [104] further observes, it would render the ministry only convenient, and not absolutely "necessary" to the church, which is contrary to the institution of it; and such a practice would tend to make a church content without a pastor, and careless and negligent of seeking after one when without one.

Thirdly, another question is, Whether a pastor may move from one congregation to another? The answer is, if it is for worldly advantage, and he has a sufficient provision where he is, he ought not. There are some cases in which it may be lawful for him to move; as when it appears to be for the good of the interest of religion, and of the church of Christ in general; but this should not be without the consent of the church of which he is pastor; nor without the advice of other churches and ministers; and when a church, of which he is pastor, indulges immoralities, or has imbibed erroneous doctrines, from which they cannot be reclaimed; and if there are such divisions in the church as are not to be cured; and especially if the pastor has such a concern in them, that there is no probability of their being healed but by his removal; also when a competent provision is not made for him and his family, but they are not only exposed to want, but the gospel also to the reproach and contempt of the world.

Fourthly, it may be asked, Whether on account of bodily weakness, or a decay of intellectual abilities, a pastor may resign his office, or be desired to desist from his work? the answer is, he may voluntarily lay down his office, with the consent of the church; or he may be desired to drop it, provided, if his case requires it, a provision is made for his temporal subsistence.

Fifthly, if it is a question, whether a pastor of a church may be deposed from his office, and be cast out of the church for immorality or heresy, it may be answered in the affirmative; for he may be admonished and reproved for negligence in the discharge of his office, and be stirred up to it (Col. 4:17), a charge of sin may be brought against him, under proper witnesses, according to the rule (1 Tim. 5:19), an elder or pastor is a brother, and to be dealt with as such, according to Matthew 18:15. Indeed, if the sole power of excommunication lies in the pastor, he cannot be dealt with in such a manner; but that is not the case; it lies in the church, as will be seen hereafter; to which power a pastor of a church is equally subject as a private member.

---

[82] Song Jerom, in his Comment. on 1 Tim. iii. 10. and on Titus. i. 5.

[83] "Novam plantam," Grotius; "Nuper baptizatum et ascriptum in numerum christianorum," Vatablus.

[84] cheirotonein, "hic simpliciter vertamus per eligere, decernere, designare, ordinare per electionem," Vitringa de Synagog. vet. l. 3. par. 1. c. 14. p. 821.

[85] Of these two ways of choosing officers with the Jews, Philo, speaks, de Judice, p. 718. in initio.

[86] cheirotonesantes, "per suffragia delegissent, creassent": so Beza, Erasmus, Vatablus, H. Stephanus. "ortum est hoc verbum ex Graeeorum consuetudine, qui porrectis manibus suffragia ferebant," Beza in Act. 14, 23.

[87] Ep. 1. ad Corinth. p. 100.

[88] Pontii vita Cyprian. p. 2. & Cyprian. ep. 40. p. 75. & ep. 55. p. 115, 116.

[89] Ib. ep. 52. p. 97. & ep. 67. p. 163.

[90] Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 6. c. 29.

[91] Apud Theodoret. Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 9.

[92] Vide Sulpicii Severi vit. Martin, p. 224.

[93] "Inter opera ejus," tom. 2. ep. 110.

[94] "Electionis formula de episcopis et praefectis ecclesiae per suffragia populi constituendis, ea semper mihi visa est optima, quam legimus apud Augustinum de creatione Eradii." Aonii Palearii Testimonium, c. 16. p. 367. This learned Italian was a glorious confessor and martyr of Jesus; who, for the noble witness he bore against popish innovations, and particularly against the popish inquisition; which he said was a sword drawn to cut the throats of learned men, (Vid. Lampe, Synops. Hist. Sacr. et Ecclesiastic. l. 2. c. 13. s. 29. p. 453.) was taken up at Milan, bound, and sent to Rome, where he was condemned to the flames, and was burnt alive, after he had made a bold confession of his faith, about the year 1566, some say 1570, under pope Pius V. The above Testimonium referred to was written by him, and designed to be sent to the emperor. The Christian kings and princes, and the presidents of a general council then deliberating, to be held at Trent; which, when written, was very worthy of their regard, and now to be read by every Protestant.

[95] "Imponuntur quidem manus etiam Paulo et Barnaba in ecclesia Antiochena, Spiritu sancto jubente; sed opus illud videtur plane extraordinarium, seu in ministerium illic singulare designatio; nec alterutrius eorum in presbyteratus facultatem ordinatio," Selden de Synedriis, l. 2. c. 7. s. 7.

[96] "Manus impositio; quid est enim aliud nisi oratio super hominem?" Augustin. contra Donatist. l. 3. c. 16.

[97] See Lord Brook's Discourse of the Nature of Episcopacy, p. 76, 77.

[98] "Meminisse autem diaconi debent, quoniam apostolos, id est, episcopos et praepositos dominus elegit: diaconos autem post ascensuna domini in coelos, apostoli sibi constituerunt episcopatus sui et ecclesiae ministros," Cyprian, ep. 65. p. 158.

[99] Deut. Synagog. vet. l. 3. par 2. c. 5.

[100] Iliad. 2. v. 243, 254.

[101] ten auten praxin, "eundem actum, vel eandem actionem," Vatablus.

[102] "Qui fines alieni officii invadit," Gerhardus apud Stockium in voce.

[103] See more of this question in a little tract called "A Discussion of the Lawfulness of a Pastor's acting as an Officer in other Churches besides his own; "by Nathaniel Mather. London, printed 1698, which is sufficient to convince any of the unlawfulness of it, whose mind is open to conviction; and from whence I have borrowed many of the above hints.

[104] True nature of a Gospel Church, ch. 5. p. 94.

Chapter 4

OF THE DUTIES OF MEMBERS OF CHURCHES TO THEIR PASTORS

As pastors of churches have a work to do, which is both honourable and useful; so there are duties incumbent on those who are under their care, with respect to them, for their work's sake. Though they are "nothing," with respect to God, to whom they owe all they have (1 Cor. 3:7), and with respect to the churches, they are theirs, for their use and service; yet they are not to be reckoned as nothing by them, and to be treated with contempt; "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ;" made such and put into the ministry by him, being furnished from him with gifts and graces for it, and as such, to be highly accounted of; and though they are not lords and masters in the family of God, yet they are stewards in it, the highest officers in the house of God; and therefore are to be accounted of as "stewards of the mysteries of God," having the secret and hidden things of God entrusted with them; the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the sublime as well as plainer doctrines of the gospel, which they are to minister: and since it is given them of God to know them and make them known to others, they are worthy of respect on that account (1 Cor. 4:1). The various duties which members of churches are under obligation to perform to their respective ministers, pastors, and elders, will be considered farther as they lie in various passages of scripture.

First, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13, "We beseech you brethren to know them," &c.

1*st*, it is the duty of church members to know their pastors; which is not to be understood of a bare

knowledge of their persons; for it cannot be supposed, that there can be such a relation between pastors and members, and yet the members not know their pastors; the sheep know their shepherd and his voice.

1. To know them is to be acquainted with them; to make themselves and their cases known unto them; for sometimes to "know" signifies to make known; as in 1 Corinthians 2:2. Members of churches should freely converse with their pastors, and make known the state and condition of their souls; and especially when they have any matter of difficulty and cases of conscience to be resolved, or are in any soul trouble and distress; they should open their minds to them, and declare their case, that they may speak a word in season to them; for though their cases may sometimes be hit upon and reached in the general ministry of the word, yet this is owing to an extraordinary direction of providence, and cannot in common be expected by all; at least it cannot be assured of, unless persons unbosom themselves to their ministers, and tell them their case.

2. To know them is to acknowledge them as their ministers and pastors. Not to know is not to own and acknowledge; as in Luke 13:27. It is for members so to know their pastors, as to own them as such; as theirs in a peculiar sense, in which other ministers are not; as in a special relation to them, and under their particular care; and this acknowledgment of them should be testified by their submission to them in their ministerial services and pastoral acts; of which more hereafter.

3. To know them is to take notice of them, to show respect to them, to "hold such in reputation," as the apostle advises (Phil. 2:29), to give them the honour that is due unto them; not to know Christ, his ministers, and his people, is to despise them, and to treat them in a disrespectful manner (1 John 3:1; Luke 10:16).

4. To know them is to love them; for words of knowledge oftentimes connotate love and affection (2 Tim. 2:19), and so the apostle explains this of members knowing their pastors, by esteeming them "very highly in love," (2 Tim. 2:13) such as the Galatians expressed to the apostle Paul, though they afterwards became cool and indifferent to him; yea, the reverse of their former love.

5. To know them is to show a concern for their comfort and welfare, their safety and protection (Ps. 142:4) people should be concerned for the safety of their minister in the discharge of his office; to protect him from the insolent attempts of wicked men, that he may he with them without fear, while he ministers to them; as the apostle exhorted the Corinthians, with respect to Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10), and they should be careful to preserve his credit and reputation, and defend his character from the false aspersions of men, and not surlier, even among themselves, anything to be whispered to his discredit, and to the hurt of his usefulness; nor any accusation to be brought in public against him, without sufficient evidence (1 Tim. 5:19).

Now the arguments and reasons made use of to enforce this duty are,

(1). Because such persons "laboured among them;" they were not non-residents, but were upon the spot where the people were, they had the care of; as the flock was among them they were to feed, so they were among the flock, resided in the midst of them, or near them; for where should pastors be, but with their flocks, to feed them they have the oversight of? (1 Peter 5:2) and faithful ministers are not only among their people, and continue with them, but they "labour" among them; they are not loiterers, slothful servants, who hide their talents in a napkin, and may be called idle shepherds, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber, who serve not the Lord Jesus, nor the souls of men, but their own bellies: but faithful ministers are labourers, labour in the word and doctrine, and so are worthy of double honour.

(2). Because they are "over" the churches to whom they minister; they are set in the first and most eminent place in the church, and have the rule over the members of it; and this superiority over them "is in the Lord," in things pertaining to his interest and glory; not in civil, but spiritual things; and though they are over the churches, yet under Christ the Lord, as Head of the church and King of saints; and they are governors in and by his appointment, and therefore are to be regarded.

(3). They "admonish" the saints, with whom they are concerned, or "put them in mind," as the word signifies; [105] of their former experiences, which are delightful and refreshing, to them; and of the doctrines of the gospel they have been instructed in, and have received, and are food to their souls; and of the duties

of religion, which are incumbent upon them, the observance of which makes for their peace and good, and for the glory of God: and they admonish, warn, rebuke, and reprove; they warn of approaching danger from their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; and rebuke and reprove for errors and immoralities they may fall into, for the recovery of them. On all which accounts they are deserving of respect.

2*dly*, it is the duty of church members not only to know their pastors; but "to esteem them very highly in love for their work sake," or "superabundantly", [106] as the word signifies; over and above common esteem and affection, and above common Christians, in honour preferring them to others; they are to think highly of them, and entertain a high opinion of them, of their grace, gifts, and abilities for their work; for if they think meanly, and entertain a contemptible opinion of them, their ministry is not likely to be of much use unto them: and they should speak very highly and very honourably of them; for if members of churches do not speak well of their own pastors, it can hardly be thought they should have much respect and esteem from others; and they should speak respectfully to them, with a becoming decency, considering the character they bear, and the high office they are in, in the church: and this esteem must be cordial and affectionate, it must be "in love;" not through fear, nor in dissimulation and hypocrisy, but in sincerity and truth; and that, "for their work sake," which is laborious, attended with weariness of body; and sometimes, through it, are "nigh unto" death, as Epaphroditus was (Phil. 2:30), and which also exposes to the reproach and contempt of the world. To which may be added, that it is, notwithstanding, a good work and honourable, and very beneficial to the souls of men; and therefore those employed in it, should be esteemed for the sake of it; for the work that they have done, in which they have been useful to men for conversion, or for comfort and edification; and forasmuch as they have continued in it, and may be more useful in their day and generation, both for the good of souls and the glory of God.

Secondly, other branches of the duty of members to their pastors are expressed in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 18.

1*st*, in Hebrews 13:7 "Remember them," &c.

1. They should remember them, be mindful of them at the throne of grace, as is after exhorted to; should remember the doctrines preached by them, and treasure them up in their minds; which may be of after use to them; these they should carefully retain in their memories, and not let them slip from them; they should remember to give them the honour and respect that is due unto them, and to make a suitable provision for the outward supply of life. The reasons enforcing this exhortation are, because they "have the rule over them;" being appointed by Christ, the Head and King of the church, to govern them under him; not in a lordly manner, according to their own wills; but according to the laws and rules which Christ has given; and when they rule according to these, they rule well, and are worthy of double honour: the words may be rendered, who are "your guides or leaders". [107] Now such are the ministers of the gospel; they are the happy instruments of guiding men into the understanding of the scriptures; and of leading, under a divine direction and blessing, into the truths of the gospel; and of pointing out to them the way of life, peace, and salvation by Christ; and of directing them into the paths of faith and holiness, and are examples to them, and therefore deserve to be remembered by them. And moreover, they are said to "have spoken to them the word of God," the scriptures, given by inspiration of God, which contain his mind and will, and the doctrines which declare his grace and favour to the sons of men; these they explain truly and faithfully, according to the best light and knowledge they have; and deliver out the doctrines of them with great freedom, boldness, and fidelity: and their memory, on these accounts, is and should be blessed to truly gracious souls.

2. Their "faith" is to be "followed," or imitated; either their faithfulness in the several parts of their ministrations; or the grace of faith, their strong exercise of it, and the fruits and effects of it; or their profession of faith they hold fast without wavering; or the doctrine of faith they preach, by embracing it, abiding by it, standing fast in it, and persevering therein to the end: the motive to it is, "considering the end of their conversation;" either the drift and scope of it, which, as in connection with the following verse, is Christ, his honour and glory, who is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever;" or the whole of their conduct in the discharge of the various duties of their office, and the manner of it; or else the issue of

it in death; or the good end which, through the grace of God, they make; and which is to be considered for imitation and encouragement.

2*ndly*, what is further observed in Hebrews 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you," &c. This respects duties to be performed to the same persons who are described as before, as their leaders, guides, and governors; to whom,

1. Obedience is to be yielded; "Obey them": which obedience, in members of churches, to their pastors, lies,

(1). In a due regard to the ministry of the word by them; which regard to it is seen in a diligent and constant attendance on it; for if their pastors are to be diligent and constant in their work, they are to be as diligent and constant in attending upon them in it; if ministers are to preach the word in season and out of season, or as often as they have opportunity for it, then members should as frequently assemble to hear it: they show their obedience to the word, and to ministers in dispensing it, by their receiving it in faith and love; which they do when they receive it, not as the word of man, but as of God and Christ when they mix it with faith as they hear it, and receive the love of it. Indeed, none are obliged to receive and obey their word or doctrine, than as it appears to be agreeable to the sacred scriptures, which are to be searched diligently, as our Lord directs, and as the noble Bereans did, to see whether these things be so or not; every spirit is not to be believed, but to be tried, whether of God or not; and, indeed, everything delivered by pastors of churches is not binding on churches; nor are they obliged to receive it, but as it accords with the word of God.

(2). Obedience of members to their pastors lies in attendance on the ordinances of the gospel, as administered by them, and in joining with them constantly in the administration of them; not the ordinances of men; for they are not to be subject to ordinances of mens' invention, or which are after the commandments and doctrines of men; for then they would be the servants of men, auditor of Christ; but they are the ordinances of Christ, as they are faithfully administered by his servants, saints are to be subject to: the ministers of Christ are to teach all things Christ has commanded, and to urge the observance of them; and in this they are to be obeyed by those who are under their care, who, from a principle of love to Christ, should keep his commands, and constantly observe and attend his ordinances; but no farther are they obliged to follow their ministers, than as they are followers of Christ.

(3). Obedience of members of churches to their guides and governors, lies in regarding their admonitions, reproofs, and rebukes, whether in case of error or immorality, and whether in private or in public; and as their business is to admonish when needful, their admonitions should be well taken; as they are to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority, their authority should not be despised, but be submitted to: likewise their counsels and advice should be observed, and taken, and acted up to; especially if it appears to be founded on the word of God, and is consonant to it.

2. Another branch of the duty of church members to their pastors, is to "submit" themselves to them; that is, to the laws of Christ's house, as directed to and put into execution by them; and to their admonitions, reproofs, and censures, which are according to them; even though they may be not only public and before all, but sharp and severe, as the case may require. The reason given for such obedience and submission to them, is "because they watch for their souls;" not for the preservation of their bodies, and outward affairs; though if such who watch over these, to preserve them from hurt and damage in the night season, are to be regarded and valued, and obedience to be yielded to their alarms and directions, then much more those who watch for the good and welfare of immortal souls, which are of more worth than a world; their ministrations, in whatsoever way, are for comfort or edification, and are the instrumental means of saving souls: and what engages them to such watchfulness to preserve from error and heresy, from vice and immorality, is, that "they must give account;" to their own consciences, that they have discharged their work aright; to the church of God, to whom they are accountable if negligent; and especially to Christ, the Judge of all, to whom they must give an account of their ministry, and of the use of their talents, and of the souls put under their care, how they have discharged their duty towards them; and how such souls have behaved towards them under the ministry of the word and ordinances: and this they are desirous of doing

"with joy, and not with grief;" either at the throne of grace, where they either rejoice or complain; or at the great day, when they will be witnesses either for or against those that have been committed to them; which latter would be "unprofitable" to them, and to the disadvantage of such who occasion grief and sorrow.

3*dly*, another branch of duty in church members to their pastors, is suggested in Hebrews 13:18 "Pray for us," for us ministers; this is often inculcated in the sacred writings, as being of great moment and importance (see Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1); and members of churches should be solicitous at the throne of grace for their ministers.

1. With respect to their private studies and preparation for their work; that they may be led to suitable subjects, and be furnished with suitable matter; that their understanding may be opened to understand the word; that they may be led into the depths and mysteries of the gospel; that their gifts may be increased; and that they may be diligent, industrious, and laborious in their work.

2. With respect to their public ministrations; that they may come forth richly fraught with gospel truths; that they may have freedom and utterance in the delivery of them; that they may speak them boldly, faithfully, and fully, as they ought to be spoken; and that their labours may be blessed to saints and sinners: and unless members of churches are observant of this their duty, they cannot expect the word will be blessed to them.

3. With respect to the world, and their conduct in it; that they may be kept from the evil of the world, that the ministry be not blamed; and from the temptations of Satan, who has a peculiar spite against them; and that they may be delivered from evil and unreasonable men, who, as much as can be, endeavour to discourage them, and hinder them in their work; and they should pray for them, that they may neither be intimidated by the frowns of the world, nor allured by the flatteries of it; and they should pray for their temporal good, for their bodily health, and for the sparing of their lives for farther usefulness, and for every thing needful for them. This part of duty is enforced with the following reason; "For we trust we have a good conscience," exercised in an upright discharge of the ministerial work; "in all things, willing to live honestly;" not only as men, but as ministers, faithfully dispensing the word of truth; the temptations to the contrary being many, prayer is desired by them.

Thirdly, the duty of church members to their pastors, is held forth in various passages, respecting their maintenance, or a provision for the subsistence of themselves and families; which is part of that double honour a ruling elder and a laborious minister is worthy of, since "the labourer is worthy of his reward," (1 Tim. 5:17, 18) and he that is taught in the word, and instructed by it to his comfort and edification, should "communicate to him that teacheth in all good things," temporal good things he stands in need of (Gal. 6:6). This duty the apostle urges and presses with a variety of arguments, in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 he argues from the law of nature and nations, exemplified in the cases of soldiers, planters of vineyards, and keepers of flocks, who, by virtue of their calling and service, have a right to a livelihood; between whom, and ministers of the gospel, there is a resemblance: also he argues from the law of Moses, particularly the law respecting the ox, not to be muzzled when it treads out the corn; which he interprets of ministers of the word, and applies it to them: he argues the right of the maintenance of the ministers of the gospel from the justice and equity of the thing; that since they minister spiritual things, it is but reasonable they should receive temporal ones: he makes this clear from the case of the priests and Levites under the legal dispensation, who ministering in holy things, had a provision made for them: and lastly, from the constitution and appointment of Christ himself, whose ordinance it is, that they that preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.

Fourthly, it is the duty of members of churches to adhere to their pastors, and abide by them in every condition and state, and in all cases and circumstances they come into; to support them under all their difficulties; to encourage them under all their discouragements; to sympathize with them in all their trials and troubles; to assist them all they can in their arduous work, against gainsayers, false teachers, and such as may rise up among themselves, speaking perverse things, and doing evil ones; the apostle Paul complains that all men forsook him in his troubles, and commends particularly Onesiphorus for his attachment to him and concern for him.

Now as there are duties belonging to the office of pastors, to be performed by them, and duties incumbent on members of churches towards them; on the performance of these mutual duties, the order, peace, good, and welfare of communities depend; and therefore should be strictly attended to, and religiously observed.

---

[105] nouthetountas
[106] uper ek perissou
[107] tmn egoumenon umon

Chapter 5

OF THE OFFICE OF DEACONS

The other officers in the gospel church are deacons; and the things to be treated of respecting this office, are the nature and original of it; the work to be performed by those who are appointed to it; their qualifications for it, and the encouragement to the diligent performance of it; with the duties of a church respecting them.

First, the nature and original of it: It is not a political, but an ecclesiastic office; sometimes, indeed, the word is used in a political sense, for the civil magistrate; who is said to be theou diakonos, "the deacon of God;" we render it, the "minister of God," (Rom. 13:4) one appointed by him, and who serves under him, for the public good: but it is commonly used in an ecclesiastic sense; sometimes for extraordinary ministers, as apostles, whose ministry is called diakonia, a "deaconship," and is joined with apostleship (Acts 1:17, 25), and the apostle Paul calls himself and Apollos diakonoi, deacons or ministers, by whom ye believed (1 Cor. 3:6), and even our Lord Jesus Christ has this name and title, as the prophet of the church, and a preacher of the everlasting gospel; Now I say that Jesus Christ was a deacon or minister of the circumcision, or to the circumcised Jews (Rom. 15:8), not to take notice, that the ministry of angels is called diakonia, a deaconship (Heb. 1:14). To proceed, it is oftener given to ordinary preachers and ministers of the word; as to Tychicus, Epaphras, and others (Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7, 4:7), but elsewhere a deacon is spoken of as a distinct officer from either ministers extraordinary or ordinary; so the apostle speaks of the office of an elder, bishop, or overseer, and of the office of a deacon, as two distinct offices; and after he had given the qualifications of the one, he gives the qualifications of the other (1 Tim. 3:8-13), and the officers of the church at Philippi are distinguished into bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1).

Now the original of the institution of this office we have an account of, as is commonly thought, in Acts 6:1-5 by which it seems to have been originally a branch of the ministerial office, as executed by the apostles; and, indeed, the whole of the ecclesiastic ministry was in their hands, the management of the secular, as well as of the spiritual affairs of the church: the first Christians, the members of the church at Jerusalem, sold their possessions, and had all things common, and parted them to all, as every man had need; and the apostles had the disposal and distribution of them; for they were brought and laid at their feet for that purpose (Acts 2:44, 45, 4:34-37, 5:2), this church becoming very numerous, which at first consisted of about an hundred and twenty, increased to some thousands; and their poor likewise increased; for the poor from the first had the gospel preached to them, and received it; and these were chosen, called, and brought into the church; and this being the case, there was a murmuring of the Grecians, of the Hellenistic Jews, who were born and lived in Greece; but coming to Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost, were converted, and joined themselves to the church at Jerusalem: now a complaint was lodged by these against the Hebrews, who were natives of Judea, and particularly of Jerusalem, that their poor widows were neglected in the daily ministration, suggesting, there was some partiality used; that the widows of the natives of Jerusalem were more favoured than the widows of such who had lived in foreign parts; this greatly affected the apostles, and embarrassed them in the spiritual part of their ministry, in which they were hindered by their attention and application to the secular affairs of the church; and therefore called the church together, and thus argued with them; "It is not reason, that we should leave the word of God and serve tables;" as it is not proper that any ordinary minister of the word should be "entangled with the affairs of this life," if possible; that he may "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine and meditate upon them, and give himself wholly to them". Wherefore the apostles

proposed to the church, thus called together, to look out and choose from among themselves seven men, of such qualifications they mentioned, to attend this service: and as for themselves, they would "give up themselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word;" and this proposal being acceptable to the people, they chose men so qualified, and presented them to the apostles for their approbation; and so they were installed into their office. [108] This seems to be the original of the institution of this office. By which it appears,

1. That those who are chosen to this office must be members of the church, or they are not eligible; and that they are to be chosen by the vote and suffrage of the church; and their destination is only to that church to which they belong; they cannot officiate in another; nor have they any concern with the poor of another church; the collections of that church to whose peculiar service they are appointed, are to be received by them, and to be distributed to the members of that church, and of that only. Extraordinary collections from other churches, we may observe, were sent to the elders, to be disposed of by them (Acts 11:30). Wherefore,

2. The apostles, though they gave up themselves more especially to prayer, and the ministry of the word, yet they did not divest themselves wholly of this service; (see Acts 12:25) and deacons now have a connection and concern with elders and pastors of churches in the discharge of their office; they are to acquaint them with the state of the church, and the cases of the poor, and to take their advice in any matters of moment and importance, and to be assisting to them in the outward affairs of the church, and may be what the apostle calls "helps," in 1 Corinthians 12:28 being helpful to the minister, church, and poor.

3. This office was instituted when the church was numerous; wherefore the number of seven in the first church, is not a rule and example binding on all future churches; [109] but such a number are to chosen, and may be increased, as the exigency of churches requires; and some have thought, that where a church is very small, a pastor may perform the whole work, with a little assistance from the church; but I cannot but be of opinion, that one deacon at least, if not two, are necessary to form an organized church.

4. The objects of this office, are the poor of the church, which were in all churches in all ages; "The poor ye have always with you," (John 12:8) and to be taken care of; so that the reason of its first institution continues, namely, to ease the ministers of the gospel from too much concern in the secular affairs of the church (Acts 6:2), and such officers were appointed not only in the first church at Jerusalem, though extraordinary ones, as some think, but in other churches of the Gentiles, at least ordinary ones; as at Philippi (Phil. 1:1), and the particular qualifications are given of these officers; which seem to be given as a direction to the churches in future ages for the choice of them (1 Tim. 3:8; &c).

Secondly, the work and business to be performed by them who are appointed to this office.

1. Not to preach the gospel, and administer ordinances, as baptism and the Lord's Supper; and therefore ministerial qualifications are not required of them; Philip, indeed, one of the seven, did both preach and baptize (Acts 6:5, 8:5, 38), but then he did both by virtue of his office as an evangelist (Acts 21:8). In Tertullian's time deacons were allowed to baptize; he says, the first right belongs to the bishop, then to the presbyters, then to the deacons, [110] but not without the authority of the bishop; but this appears to be an intire innovation.

2. Nor is their work and business to rule in the church; we read of ruling elders, but never of ruling deacons; if they were, women might not be deaconesses, as Phebe was, for they are not to rule: deacons may and should be assisting to pastors or elders in the care of the church; as to watch over the walk and conversation of the members of the church, and to observe that they keep their places in it; and to exhort, admonish, and reprove, as they may find it necessary; and to visit the sick, and such that are in distress of any kind; and to report the state of the church to the elder or pastor; and to reconcile differences between one member and another, and to prepare matters to be laid before the church at church meetings, when needful.

3. But their principal business is to "serve tables," which the apostles relinquished and gave up to the seven, at the first institution of them (Acts 6:2). As,

1. The Lord's table, as it is called (1 Cor. 10:21), that is, at the administration of the ordinance of the supper, their business is, to provide everything

necessary for it; as the bread and the wine, and all kind of furniture needful on that occasion; and when the elements are blessed, and the bread broken, and wine poured out, and these given into their hands by the pastor or elder, they are to deliver out to the members; so in Justin Martyr's time, they that were called "deacons," he says, gave to everyone that were present, that they might partake of the bread and the wine, for which thanks were given by the president. [111]

2. The minister's table; to take care that a proper provision is made for the subsistence of himself and family; that whereas Christ has ordained, that those who preach the gospel, should live of it, and that he that is taught in the word, should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things; the business of deacons is to see to it, that every member contributes according to his ability; and that there be an equality, that some are not eased and others burdened: and it lies upon them to collect what the members give, for it is not proper the minister should collect for himself; this would be to prevent the design of the institution, which was, that those who are employed in the sacred office of the ministry of the word, should not be hindered in it. Besides, such a practice would not comport with the case and character of a minister, who would he obliged to receive what the people gave him, without making any remonstrance against it, as failing in their duty to him; and he might also be exposed to the charge of avarice; to which may be added, that a church would not be able to judge whether their pastor was sufficiently provided for or not.

3. The poor's table; it was an apostolical order given to the churches, that they should make a collection for the poor saints, on the first day of the week; and it seems as if it was designed to be every first day; to which everyone was to give, having laid by him a store for it, as God had prospered him (1 Cor. 16:1, 2), which collections, and those made at the Lord's Supper, are to be received by the deacons, with whatsoever gifts may come into their hands, and be distributed to the necessities of the saints; and they are, both by their own example, and by their exhortations, to stir up the members of churches to contribute liberally to the relief of the poor: and what they receive they are to communicate,

(1). Impartially, that is, as the apostle expresses it, "with simplicity," without partiality, and without favour and affection; showing no respect to persons, taking more notice of, and giving more liberally to one than to another, which was the original complaint in the first church, and made the office necessary; and therefore the deacon should be careful to avoid any cause of it: the principal rule he should go by is, to give as everyone needeth; to some more, and others less, as their case requires.

(2). This should be done with "cheerfulness," (Rom. 12:8) without any frowns in the countenance, and without any hard and rough words, which the tender minds of the poor, broken with distress, cannot well bear; when what is given cheerfully and pleasantly, does them double good; nor should they be upbraided with misconduct in former life, which may have brought them into low circumstances. God loves a cheerful giver, and he himself gives liberally, and upbraids not.

(3). This should be done with compassion and tenderness. The work of a deacon is expressed by his "showing mercy," (Rom. 12:8) and he should exercise it in a pitiful and merciful manner, as sympathizing with them in their poor and low circumstances; in imitation of the great High Priest of our profession, who is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of his people.

(4). This office should be executed with great faithfulness; deacons are the church's stewards, and are intrusted with the church's stock; and it is required of stewards, that they distribute with fidelity what is put into their hands, and for the uses for which it is given. The next thing to be inquired into,

Thirdly, are the qualifications of persons for such an office; some of which may be taken from Acts 6:3. As,

1. That they are to be of "honest report;" of whom a testimony can be given of their honesty, integrity, and good conversation; who have a good report of them that are without, of all men, of the men of the world, and of them that are within; and who are well reported of by the brethren, by the members of other churches, especially by the members of the church to which they belong.

2. "Full of the Holy Ghost," of his gifts and graces; though they may not be so eminently endowed with

them as Stephen and Philip were, which is not to be expected; yet that they should appear to be partakers of the grace of the Spirit, and to have such gifts as to "comfort the feeble minded, support the weak," and speak a word in season to those who are in distress.

3. Men of "wisdom;" for as they are stewards, wisdom, as well as faithfulness, is required of them; to give to everyone of the poor a portion of the church's monies, as they need; and to distinguish eases and circumstances requires wisdom; besides, persons in such an office are sometimes called upon to make up differences between member and member; which is often a difficult task, and calls for all the prudence a man is possessed of; and to these, or such as these, the apostle refers, when he says, "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one, that shall be able to judge between his brethren," without going to law before unbelievers (1 Cor. 6:5, 6).

There are other qualifications of a deacon observed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

1. As to his personal character; he must be "grave" in his speech and gesture, and not light, frothy, and vain; and not only modest, chaste, honest, and of good behaviour, but as the word, may signify also one that has some weight and influence, who is venerable [112] and respectable, and has some degree of reverence and esteem with the people: "Not double tongued;" so as to express pity to the poor, yet show no concern to relieve them; and to say one thing to them, and another to the church and minister; or to say one thing to one member, and another to another, which may tend to alienate the affections of one from another. "Not given to much wine;" which, though lawful to be used, yet not to excess; which would both destroy his character in the church and in the world, and render him unfit for the business of his office. "Not greedy of filthy lucre," or covetous; such may be tempted to make a wrong application of the church's money; and besides, persons in such an office should be liberal themselves, according to their abilities, and set a good example to others; or otherwise they cannot, with a good grace, stir up others to liberality; which is one part of their office.

2. Others concern his domestic character; he should be "the husband of one wife;" it is not necessary that he should be a married man; but if married, he should have but one wife, that is, at the same time; polygamy had been much in use among the Jews and Gentiles; and the first Christians were not soon and easily brought to the disuse of that practice; but the apostle, by divine inspiration, judged it necessary that no officer of a church, bishop or deacon, should have more wives than one; since it would serve to continue and encourage the practice, set an example of it, and expose to reproach and censure: the apostle adds, "Ruling their children and their own houses well;" both wife, children, and servants; such ought to keep a good decorum in their families; or how else can it be expected that the affairs of the house of God, so far as they are concerned therein, should be dispatched with honour, faithfulness, and diligence. The apostle has also thought fit to give the qualifications of their wives, who must be grave in their speech, gesture, and dress; as well as modest, chaste, and of good deportment: "not slanderers, or accusers;" false accusers, acting the part of the devil, as the word signifies; [113] for such may do a great deal of mischief in the church, through their influence on their husbands: they must be "sober," temperate, not given to excessive drinking, which would be scandalous; "faithful in all things," respecting their husbands and family; and this is the rather mentioned, since otherwise they might have opportunities of embezzling the church's money, and which, in some cases, they might be intrusted with to dispose of to the poor, in the absence of their husbands.

3. With respect to the spiritual and evangelical character of deacons, they should be such who "hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience;" are sound in the gospel, and the doctrines of it; for by "faith" is meant the gospel, the faith once delivered to the saints; and by the "mystery" of it, the more sublime and mysterious doctrines of the gospel, especially the doctrine of the Trinity; which, with the Jews, was commonly called, "the mystery of the faith;" and is the same the apostle calls, "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," (Col. 2:2) such doctrines which relate to the distinction of Persons in the God head; the divine Sonship, proper Deity, and distinct personality of Christ; the Deity, personality and operations of the Spirit; the incarnation of Christ, and the union of the two natures in him; the resurrection of the dead; with others: these things deacons are to hold, with a conscience purified by the blood of Christ,

and with a holy, becoming life and conversation: this qualification is necessary in them, that they may be able to instruct and establish others in the faith, and to confute the erroneous; for should their principles be bad, their influence on others might be pernicious and fatal. Now these must first be proved, and "then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless;" not that they are to exercise any part of this office first, that it might be known how capable they are of it; but that it should appear that they are men of the above characters and qualifications; are of some standing in the church, and are well known and approved of for their soundness in the faith and purity of conversation. There is but one sort of deacons of this kind mentioned in scripture; unless it can be thought there were women deacons, or "deaconesses;" and, indeed, Phebe is called diakonos, a "deacon," or "deaconess," of the church of Cenchrea; we render the word "servant," (Rom. 16:1) and some render the "wives" of deacons, "their women," (1 Tim. 3:11) and by them understand "deaconesses;" and if the same with the "widows," as some think, their qualifications, as to age, character, and conduct, are described (1 Tim. 5:9, 10) and it seems certain there were such in the second century, whether virgins or widows; such seem to be the two servant maids Pliny [114] speaks of, whom he examined on the rack, concerning the Christians, and by whom he says they were called "ministrae," ministresses, or deaconesses; and Clemens of Alexandria, in the "second" century, makes mention expressly of women deacons, as spoken of by the apostle in his epistle to Timothy; [115] so Jerome, [116] in the fourth century, speaks of them as in the eastern churches: and, indeed, something of this kind seems not at all unnecessary, but of service and usefulness; as to attend at the baptism of women, and to visit the sisters of the church, when sick, and to assist them. In the third century an officer was introduced, called a "subdeacon," an under deacon, who seems to have been an assistant to the deacon, when the churches became large, and their poor numerous, and the deacons required assistance; though it would have been much more proper to have increased their number of deacons; but as for that "meteor," as Dr. Owen [117] calls him, an "archdeacon," he was not heard of until the fourth or fifth centuries; and then not as the creature which now exists under that name.

Fourthly, the encouragement given to the diligent and faithful performance of the office of a deacon.

1. Such "purchase," or get, "to themselves a good decree". The conjecture of Dr. Owen's [118] is very trifling, which I should not have expected from so great a man, as that it signifies a place of some eminence, a seat more highly raised up to sit in, in church assemblies; something like the chief seats in a Jewish synagogue: nor by it is meant a higher degree in his own office; for there are no degrees of higher and lower in the office of a deacon; no subdeacon nor archdeacon, as before observed: nor is it preparatory to an higher order: as of presbytery or eldership; since the office of a deacon lies chiefly in the management of temporal things; and not in study and meditation of spiritual things. In after times, in the third century, such a practice began to take place, as to go through all ecclesiastical offices, to the office of a bishop, as Cyprian [119] says Cornelius bishop of Rome did; and it is said to be ordered by Caius, bishop of the same place, in the same century, that the degrees to a bishopric, through which men should pass to it, were a door keeper, a reader, an exorcist, an acolyte, a subdeacon, a deacon, a presbyter, and then a bishop; [120] but this is all of mere human and antichristian appointment: nor is a greater degree in glory meant, which it is questionable whether there will be any; but rather an increase of gifts and graces is designed; which, under a divine blessing, may be attained, through a deacon's more intimate conversation with the pastor and the members of the church, and even the poor of it: though it seems chiefly to intend a good degree of honour in the faithful discharge of his office, from both minister, church, and poor.

2. Such obtain "boldness in the faith;" in the exercise of faith at the throne of grace; and in asserting the doctrine of faith; and in vindicating their own character before men, as faithful men; and in reproving for immorality or error.

Fifthly, the duties belonging to a church and its members, to persons in such an office.

1. To supply them with what is sufficient to relieve the wants of the poor; for they are not to supply them out of their own purses; but to distribute faithfully what is put into their hands by the church.

2. They should be applied unto for direction and counsel in any, private matters, and especially which

relate unto the church; since they are supposed to be men of wisdom, and capable of judging of things, with respect to particular persons, and between one member and another.

3. They are to be esteemed highly for their work's sake; their office being a very useful one to the church, when diligently and faithfully performed.

4. To be prayed for; for if we are to pray for all civil magistrates and officers, then certainly for all ecclesiastical officers; not only pastors of churches, but deacons also; that they may be supported under all discouragements and difficulties; and that they may be able to discharge their office with reputation and usefulness.

---

[108] Of their ordination and instalment see chap. 3. book ii. p. 632, 633. See on topic 1229.

[109] Though the council at Neocaesarea ordered, that there should be seven deacons, according to the rule in Acts, Can. CIV. apud Magdeburg. cent. 4. col. 349. And in the Roman church there were seven, and no more; but in other churches the number was indifferent, or indeterminate, as the historian says, Sozomen. Eccl. Hist. l. 7. c. 19.

[110] Deut. Baptismo, c. 17.

[111] Apolog. 2. p. 97. vid. Cyprian. de Lapsis, p. 244.

[112] semnous.

[113] diabolous.

[114] Ep. l 10. ep. 97. vid. Pignorium de Servis, p. 109.

[115] Stromat l. 3. p. 448.

[116] Comment. in 1 Tim. iii. 11.

[117] True Nature of a Gospel Church, ch. 9. p. 184.

[118] Ibid. p. 187.

[119] Ep. 52. p. 96.

[120] Platinae vit. Pontif. p 34.

Chapter 6

OF THE DISCIPLINE OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST

Though the light of nature, and the laws and rules of civil society, may be very assisting in the affair of church discipline; and may in many things serve to illustrate and confirm it; yet it does not stand upon human, but divine authority. By the light of nature it may be known, man being a sociable creature, that men may form themselves into societies for mutual good; that they have a right to make laws and rules binding on each other, which are not contrary to justice and truth; to admit such into their societies who have a right to dispose of themselves, and assent to the rules of the society, and to keep out or expel such who refuse to be subject to them; and to choose and appoint whom they think fit to preside over them, to see that their laws and rules are put into execution; with other things of like nature. But Christ is sole head, king, and lawgiver in his house and kingdom; and no man, nor set of men, have a power to set up a church society, but what is by direction and according to the rule of his word, and the pattern of his house; nor to make laws and rules, but what he has made; nor to appoint any other sort of officers in his house, but whom he has appointed and directed to, and described the qualifications of; to whom he gives gifts and abilities, office power and authority to rule under him in his church: nor are any to be admitted into it, nor excluded from it, but according to his directions and orders; hence Ezekiel, after he had described the gospel church in its purity, as it will be in the latter day, is ordered to "show the house to the house of Israel;" the form, fashion, laws, and ordinances of it, to be copied after, and observed by them (Ezek. 43:10, 11). Now whereas there are various passages of scripture, which are taken for rules of church discipline, which are misunderstood and misapplied, it will be proper to mark them, that none may be misled by them. As,

First, the words of our Lord to Peter, after he had made such a noble confession of his faith in him, as the Son of God; and Christ had declared, that upon that rock he professed faith in, he would build his church, against which the gates of hell should not prevail; he adds, "And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," &c. (Matthew 16:19) which are usually understood of the admission of members into a church, and the exclusion of them; and of laying on of censures, and of taking them off. But they have respect, not at all to discipline, but to doctrine. The keys have made a great noise and rattling in the world, and many contests have been raised about them; what they are, and the power of them, in whose hands they are lodged, and who has the right to the use and

exercise of them; when, after all, they relate not to church discipline, but to gospel doctrine. By "the kingdom of heaven" is not meant, neither the church in heaven, nor the gospel church state on earth; nor do the keys signify any lordly power and domination in it; which Christ never gave to Peter, nor to any of the apostles, and much less to ordinary ministers and elders of churches, who are not allowed to lord it over God's heritage; Christ keeps the key in his own hand, the key of the house of David: but the gospel itself is meant; hence we read of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" that is, of the doctrines of the gospel: this kingdom of heaven was "shut up against men" in the Jewish world, through the wickedness or ignorance of the scribes and Pharisees, who took away the "key of knowledge" from the people (Matthew 23:13; Luke 11:52), and in the Gentile world, through the blindness, and ignorance, and want of divine revelation, they were left unto (Acts 17:30). Now a mission and commission to preach the gospel, and gifts and abilities for the same, are the keys by which the treasures of grace are unlocked, the stores of it opened and displayed, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven explained, and clearly held forth to the view of others; now though these were given, not to Peter alone, but to all the apostles at the same time, yet Peter was the first who had the use and exercise of them; and with these he opened the "door of faith," that is, the gospel; first to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, which was the first sermon after the commission was given, and proved the conversion of three thousand souls: [121] and he was the first who preached the gospel to the Gentiles, to Cornelius and his family, to which first ministration of his to them, both he and James have a respect in the synod at Jerusalem (Acts 15:7, 14), and that these keys, and the use of them, belonged to all the apostles, as well as to Peter, appears from hence, that to whomsoever the keys, and the use of them, belonged, the same had the power of binding and loosing conferred upon them; and that all the apostles had the latter, is manifest from Matthew 18:18 which words are also misunderstood of, and misapplied to binding men with censures laid upon them, till they repent, and of loosing them from them when they do; but the words are spoken, not of persons, but of things; it is not said, "whomsoever ye bind;" but, "whatsoever ye bind," &c. and signify no other than declarations of what is unlawful or lawful; of what is forbidden or free of use; in which sense the words "binding" and "loosing" are used in thousands of instances in Jewish writings; and our Lord expresses himself in a manner which the Jews thoroughly understood, and his apostles must; and his meaning is, that whatsoever they bound, prohibited, declared as unlawful to be used, was so, though before lawful; and whatsoever they loosed, declared to be lawful, and free of use, was so; though before the death of Christ, and their commission, was unlawful: thus for instance, they "bound," prohibited circumcision, and declared it unlawful; though it was of the fathers, and was enjoined Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their male seed, to the coming of the Messiah; but since his death, and their commission to preach the gospel, they declared it to be nothing at all, no more to be used and practised; yea, that it was pernicious and hurtful; that Christ profited them nothing who used it, and was of no effect to them (Gal. 5:1-4, 6, 6:15), they "bound," or forbid, the observance of days, and months, and times, and years, and declared them weak and beggarly elements, and that no man was to be judged or condemned for the disuse of them, though they had been, for ages past, used in the Jewish church; as the first day of the year, and of every month, the feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, the jubilee year, the sabbatical year, and the seventh day sabbath (Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16, 17). On the other hand, they "loosed," or declared lawful and free of use, civil correspondence between Jews and Gentiles; which before had been unlawful, at least according to the traditions of the Jews; and Peter was the first who had light into it, by the vision of the four footed beasts, which was given him; for before he thought it was an unlawful thing for a man that was a Jew to come into or keep company with one of another nation; but by that vision God showed him that he was not to call any man common or unclean (see Acts 10:28, 11:2, 3, 18); and so they all afterwards understood, that under the gospel dispensation there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, nor male nor female; but they were all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28), likewise they "loosed," or declared lawful and free of use, the eating of any sort of food, of which there was a distinction under the old law, and was bid; but now they saw, from the words of Christ (Matthew 15:11),

and Peter, by the above vision; and Paul, by Christ, that there was nothing common and unclean of itself; and that the kingdom of God did not lie in meat and drink, but that every creature of God was good, and nothing to be refused, if received with thanksgiving (Rom. 14:14, 17; 1 Tim. 4:4). And this power of binding and loosing reached not only to practices, but to doctrines; for as the apostles were infallibly guided into all truth; whatever they bound or forbid, and declared as false doctrine, was so; and whatever they "loosed," or declared to be truth, was so to be accounted; hence the anathema of the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:8). They had the whole counsel of God, the whole system of gospel truths made known to them; and which they have declared in their writings; and are to be observed as the rule of faith to the end of the world, being delivered under divine inspiration; of which our Lord's breathing upon them after his resurrection, and their commission from him, was an emblem, when the following words were delivered by him, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," (John 20:23) which respect not any discipline of the apostles in laying on, binding, and retaining censures on persons; and of loosing, remitting, and taking them off, according to their behaviour; but of the doctrine of remission of sins, preached by them: for this cannot be meant of remission of sins by them in an absolute and authoritative way; for none can forgive sins but God, and Christ, who is God; and who yet never gave any such power to his apostles; nor did they ever, assume this to themselves; this is the mark of who sits in the temple of God, and shows himself to be god, or to assume such a character, by taking upon him to dispense pardons and indulgences: but this is to be understood of the apostles, as ministerially and doctrinally preaching the forgiveness of sins; declaring, that such who repent of their sins, and believe in Christ, shall receive the remission of them; but that whoever do not repent of their sins, and do not believe in him, shall perish eternally, according to Mark 16:16 and by this doctrine of the apostles God and Christ will stand; and sooner or later will appear the validity, truth, and certainty of their declarations.

Secondly, there are various passages of scripture, which are thought to respect excommunication, or exclusion from church communion; which seem to have nothing to do with it, and are not to be considered as rules to proceed by, with respect unto it. As,

2a. First, the words in Matthew 18:17 "Let him, be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican;" which was no form of excommunication, neither with Jews nor with Christians. Not with Jews, for that with them was expressed by casting out of the synagogue, especially in the times of Christ: nor with Christians, with whom it was after signified by putting away wicked men from among them; between an excommunicated person, and an heathen man and publican, there was no agreement; for an heathen man and a publican, however considered by the Jews, were very familiarly conversed with by Christ and his apostles; with whom they frequently eat and drank, and Christ is called a friend of such; whereas, with an excommunicate person it was not allowed to eat, nor indeed to have any familiar conversation with them, as little as possible. Moreover, the words are not a rule to the church, how that was to proceed towards a person who behaved in the manner described; for it is not said, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be to the church as an heathen man and a publican;" but it is a rule to the offended person how he should behave to the offender, under such circumstances; "Let him be to thee," &c. and the design of the whole is to justify the offended party, that when he has taken all the steps directed to; as to reprove the offending party privately, and then with two or more, who would be witnesses of his obstinacy, and then lay the whole affair before the church or congregation, which, with the Jews, never consisted of less than ten persons; so that he would be abundantly vindicated in behaving towards such a man as chvr phchvt a worthless neighbour, as the Jews used to call such, and to look upon himself as freed from all brotherly and neighbourly offices towards him.

2*ndly*. Nor is excommunication expressed by the "delivery" of a man "to Satan;" for though that sometimes accompanied excommunication, yet they are very different and distinct things; the delivery of the incestuous person to Satan was the apostle's own act and deed; "I verily," says the apostle, "as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged," or determined within myself, "already, concerning him that hath done this deed," committed the incest before mentioned, "to deliver such an one unto Satan," (1

Cor. 5:3, 5) for the fourth verse is to be read in a parenthesis, and the third and fifth connected together; which shows it to be a pure act of the apostle; as the like is elsewhere asserted by him, concerning Hymeneus and Alexander; "Whom," says he, "I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme," (1 Tim. 1:20) whereas, excommunication is called a punishment, or censure inflicted by many, on the incestuous person; whom the church at Corinth were directed to purge themselves from, and to put away from among them, that wicked person; by which the excommunication of him from them as a church is expressed (1 Cor. 5:7, 13; see 2 Cor. 2:6), as a distinct thing from the delivery of him to Satan; which was a miraculous action, as appears from 1 Corinthians 5:4 included in a parenthesis; "in the name of our Lord Jesus;" a way of speaking when a miracle being performed (see Acts 3:6); "when ye are gathered together," not to perform this miraculous actions, but to be witnesses of it, and my spirit; for though in body he was absent from them, yet his spirit would be with them, to perform the miraculous operation; as the heart or spirit of Elisha was with Gehazi in a wonderful manner, when the man turned again to him from his chariot to meet him (2 King 5:26), the apostle adds, "with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ," to which all miraculous operations are to be ascribed, and so this; for it never was used, nor never ought to be, as a form of excommunication; it was not in the primitive churches; nay, it was cautioned against by the ancients, in one of their synods; nor never was, until excommunication was used as an engine of the church's, or rather of the priest's power to terrify and distress; this was only used in the apostles' time and then ceased; it was the apostolic rod, with which they sometimes smote wicked persons with death, as Ananias and Sapphira were smitten by Peter; and Elymas the sorcerer with blindness, by the apostle Paul; and others with diseases of body, and with violent agitations of it, and with terrors of mind; and it is remarkable that the words of the Lord concerning Job; "Behold, he is in thine hand," are rendered in the Septuagint version, "Behold, I deliver him unto thee;" that is, to smite him with boils (Job 2:6), and such a corporal punishment, or temporal chastisement, cannot be reckoned a severity, as inflicted on the incestuous person; for excommunication was too mild a punishment for him, who had been guilty of a crime not to be named among the Gentiles; as to have his father's wife! which was death, or cutting off by the hand of heaven, according to the law of Moses (Lev. 18:1-30), and so the blasphemy of Hymeneus and Alexander, by the same law, was deserving of death. It is commonly said, that this delivery of a man to Satan is only a redelivery of him into the kingdom of Satan, the world, out of which he was taken; and so is only a putting him "in statu quo;" but this is to allow the world to be the kingdom of Satan; whereas he has no true and proper right to it; it is only his by usurpation; the world is the Lord's: nor is it fact, that when a man is received into a church, he is received out of the world; for it is supposed by the church, that he is previously called by the grace of God out of it; and is by faith a partaker of Christ, and of the blessings of his grace, and is a member of the invisible church; and very often so it is, that when a person is dealt with by a church for sin; which, for the honour of Christ and his gospel, they are obliged to do, yet at the same time they cannot but hope, that he is not a man of the world, but a partaker of the grace of God; and therefore do not account him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

3*dly*, the passage in Titus 3:10 "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject;" is usually thought, and so has been by myself, to be a rule for the ejection or casting out of church communion, a person so described; but not only the word used, is never used of excommunication, nor indeed any other word in the singular number; it is not said, "reject ye," but "reject thou;" [122] and so is no direction to a church, but to a single person: now let Titus be who he may, an extraordinary person, an evangelist, as he seems to be, or a bishop of Crete, as the subscription of the epistle suggests, which is not to be depended upon, or an ordinary pastor and elder of a church, which is not probable; but be he what he may, an extraordinary or ordinary minister, he had no power nor right of himself to reject or eject any person from church communion; this would be to act the part of Diotrephes, who cast out the brethren, condemned by the apostle John; and the apostle Paul would never have advised Titus to act a part so unjustifiable; besides, could such a sense of the text be established, it would prove what the

papists, prelates, and presbyterians produce it for, namely, that the power of excommunication lies in the hands of a bishop, or prelate, or presbyter, elder or pastor of a church, and not in the church itself; and it would not be easy to rescue such a proof out of their hands; whereas, not single persons, but churches, are always addressed and exhorted to perform the act of excommunication on persons deserving of it (see Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:7, 13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). Nor were admonitions ever directed to be given to persons deserving of excommunication; in cases of private offences, admonitions were to be given; and so long as an affair lies between a person and a church, respecting either doctrine or practice, and is not known to the world and other churches, admonitions may be given and repeated as long as there are any hopes of good being done by them; but in case of atrocious public crimes, and notorious heresies, subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, no time should be lost, or trifled away with admonitions; but for the honour of Christ, the credit of religion, and for the removal of the odium brought on Christianity, such a person should be removed from communion at once; nay, even, as some think, though he may seem to have some sense of his evil, and repentance for it. We have but one instance of excommunication from a Christian church in the whole New Testament, and that is of the incestuous person; and we are sure he had no admonitions from the church before the apostle had heard of the affair; so far were they from it, that they were puffed up, when they should rather have mourned, that he that had done the deed might be taken away from them; and we are sure he had none afterwards, for the apostle immediately orders the excommunication of him. And though there are orders given to several of the churches, as before observed, for the excommunication of such and such persons, yet no directions given for the admonition of any of them, previous to their ejection: sometimes admonition is directed to be given after a person is withdrawn from, when it is not on account of any notorious crime, of a public and scandalous nature; but idleness, an unwillingness to work; and such an one cannot be looked upon as all enemy to Christ and his gospel, and may be admonished as one who had been a brother, and it may be hoped will be restored again (2 Thess. 3:14, 15). The case of Titus was a personal one, and respects a man he had been in connection with, or supposed to have been, and now fallen into heresy; when, having reproved him again and again, and endeavoured to convince him of his error, but to no purpose; he is then directed to have nothing more to say unto him or do with him, to have no society with him, nor admit him to a familiar conversation with him, lest he should be hardened in his error, and weak Christians should be stumbled. Much such advice is given by the apostle John to private Christians, not to receive such persons into their houses, nor wish them God speed (2 John 1:10).

But though the above passages are not proper and pertinent to church discipline; yet there are rules and directions which do belong to it, and are to be observed with respect unto it: and as I have considered the materials, the form and fashion of the house or church of God, both as essential and as organized; I shall now proceed to consider the rules of admission into it, or the comings in thereof, and the laws and ordinances to be observed by those who are in it, and the rules concerning the goings out of it, whether by dismission or excommunication.

First, the rules concerning the comings in, or admission of members into a gospel church.

1. The doors of it are not to be set wide open for anyone to come in at pleasure; porters were set at the gates of the house of the Lord, that no unclean person should enter in; and in Ezekiel's temple, a figure of the gospel church in the latter day, orders are given, that no stranger, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, should enter into the sanctuary of the Lord; no materials were admitted to be laid in Solomon's temple, but what were hewn and squared before brought thither.

2. Persons should voluntarily propose themselves to the church for communion with it; for this should be a free act of their own, and not by the force or persuasion of others; or they should be proposed by the minister or elder, with whom a previous conversation should be had, and an inquiry made of their experience and knowledge of divine things; so Saul, when converted, "essayed to join himself to the disciples;" that is, he tried, he attempted, he proposed himself to them, to become a member of them, and to have communion with them, as one of them (Acts 9:26).

3. In order to admission to communion, satisfaction

must be given as to a work of grace upon the soul; when. Saul desired communion with the church, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple;" a real converted person, a true believer in Christ, because he had been so lately a persecutor of the saints; until it was declared to them, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how boldly he had preached in his name; and then he was admitted, and was with them coming in and going out: and it is but fit and proper that such should give a reason of the hope that is in them, to the satisfaction of those with whom they desire to walk in fellowship; it was an early practice of the saints, to tell one another what God had done for their souls; the poor man whom Christ had dispossessed of a legion of devils, was bid to go home to his friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for him, and had had compassion on him; and this is best done by a man himself, than by the report of others; and better by a verbal declaration than by writing; for though the former may be made in a broken manner, yet it may best discover the true affection of the heart, and the savouriness of a man's spirit, and tend more to knit and unite the hearts of the Lord's people to him

4. The way of entrance into a church is by a profession of faith in Christ; for as with the heart man believes unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; the church is the sheepfold, and Christ is the door into it; and whoever climbs up another way than by faith in him, and profession of it, is a thief and a robber. The three thousand converts first professed repentance of their sins, faith in Christ for the remission of them, and their joyful reception of the gospel, and then were baptized and added to the church.

5. It is necessary that such who enter into a church state, should have knowledge of the truths of the gospel, and confess them, and not be ashamed of Christ, and his words, before men; their soundness in the doctrine of faith should be inquired into, and this be testified by their assent to the articles of faith held and maintained by the church; "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in," (Isa. 26:1).

6. Allowances should be made for weaknesses and infirmities of men, both in their gracious experiences, and in their gospel light and knowledge; the day of small things is not to be despised; the bruised reed is not to be broken, nor the smoking flax to be quenched; the tender lambs are gathered into Christ's arms, and carried in his bosom; the weak in faith are to be received, and not to doubtful disputations.

7. Testimony should be given of their becoming life and conversation; when the disciples demurred upon receiving Saul, because of his former conduct and behaviour, Barnabas informed them of the change that was in him, and that of a violent persecutor, he was become a bold and zealous preacher of the gospel, they gladly received him.

8. The reception of a member into church communion must be by mutual consent; the person received must give up him or herself to walk with the church in holy fellowship; and the church must readily receive such in the Lord; it must be a voluntary act on both sides; and if there is a pastor, the person must be received by him, in the name and with the consent of the church; and if not, by a brother appointed by the church for that purpose, the token of which is by giving the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:9). I proceed,

Secondly, to consider the ordinances, laws, and rules to be kept and observed by those who are admitted into the church.

1. There are "ordinances" they are directed to the observation of. Show them "all the ordinances" of the house, that they may "do" them; so Christ ordered his disciples to teach those they baptized to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them. Besides the ordinance of baptism, which is preparatory to church communion, there are the ordinances of public prayer and praise, and the public ministry of the word, which are constantly to be attended on; and it is very unbecoming members of churches to forsake the assembling of themselves together for public worship: it is observed, to the honour of the primitive Christians, that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine," in a constant attendance on the ministration of it; and in holy "fellowship" with one another; and "in prayer," in public prayers put up to God by the minister, as the mouth of the church; and particularly in "breaking of bread," or in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which is to be frequently administered; "As often as ye eat this bread," &c. which shows it is to be often done; and

as often as it is, it should be attended on. But of these ordinances more hereafter, in their proper course.

2. There are also "the laws of" the house, which are to be shown to members of churches, and to be observed by them; Christ is Lawgiver in it, and his commands are to be kept from a principle of love to him, even all that he has commanded. There is the moral law, which is still in force, and binding upon Christians; for Christ came not to destroy it, but to fulfil it; and his people are "under the law to him", and should be obedient to it: such who are regardless of morality are not fit to be members of churches, and are not to be continued in them. There is likewise the law of Christ, which is the law of love, the new commandment Christ has given to his disciples, by the observance of which it is known that they are his disciples. There are, moreover, various duties to be performed by members of churches, mutually towards each other; they are to submit themselves to one another in the fear of the Lord; to have the same love one for another, both with respect to things temporal and spiritual, and to watch over one another in the Lord; but these, with other incumbent duties, have been treated of in a preceding chapter.

3. There are certain rules respecting private admonitions of church members, which deserve special regard; both such as are given by ministers and elders of churches, who have not only power of admonishing those they have the rule over, and of rebuking publicly and with authority; but also in a private manner, as they go from house to house, and as they see occasion for it; which private admonitions are not to be slighted; and also those given by members, who are to admonish and rebuke one another, in a private manner, as there may be a necessity for it. The rule in Matthew 18:15-17 "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," &c. is an excellent good one, and may be accommodated to all cases in difference between two persons; whether between one neighbour and another, or between one member of a church and another; the former seems to be the original foundation of this rule, for neighbour and brother are synonymous; the passage which the rule seems to have respect unto, and is the rise of it, is in Leviticus 19:17 "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour;" where a brother is explained by a neighbour: and when there is a difference between one neighbour and another, this rule should be observed; the neighbour offended, against whom the trespass is committed, and to whom the injury is done, is to go privately to the offender, lay the evil before him, and reprove him for it, in a gentle manner; if he pays a proper regard to it, takes the reproof kindly, acknowledges the offence, and declares repentance for it, it is all very well; he is to be forgiven, no mention hereafter is to be made of the matter; but if not, if he denies the fact, or extenuates or defends it, and shows no repentance, then the offended party is to take "one or two" neighbours, and lay the case before him in their presence, who will be witnesses of the charge, and of the proof of it, and join in the admonition; but if he still remains incorrigible, then it must be told to "the church," te ekklesia, the same with dh "the congregation," which consisted at least of ten persons; [123] and when such a number were made acquainted with the whole affair, and the offender would make no acknowledgment, the offended person would be justified by all men, in treating him for the future as a worthless friend or neighbour, as the Jews used to call such an one, and take no more notice of him than of an heathen man and a publican. The rule also maybe accommodated to any difference between one member of a church and another; between a brother and a brother, who are in the same spiritual relation; and this rule must be observed in case of a private trespass only known to them, a secret fault which they are only privy to; and not a public sin, known to the whole church and to the world; for then another method must be taken: and it must be a "trespass," a sin, that the offender is guilty of; yet not a sin of infirmity, common to human nature, and which all are encompassed with; a man is not to be made an offender for a word, a small trifling thing; and yet it must not be a very atrocious and public one, which requires more than admonition, even excommunication at once; such as was the sin of the incestuous person; but a sin of a lesser nature, yet a fault, and which gives just cause of offence; and in such a case the offended brother must give the offending one private reproof, tell him his fault, between themselves alone; and if he can bring him to an acknowledgment of his fault, and he declares his sorrow for it, then the brother is gained, is restored from the error he has been guilty of; and

it is to be buried in oblivion, and no more said of it to anyone; but if not, he must take another brother or two with him, and admonish him again; and if he pays no regard to it, as strengthened by the conjunction of the brethren with him, then the direction is, "tell the church": but what is meant by is not easy to say, whether the Jewish sanhedrin or Jewish synagogue; since at that time there was no congregational church in being, unless the twelve disciples may be so called; wherefore this can only at most respect a church in future time, when such a rule should take place; however, so far as it concerns a private admonition, it is clear and manifest, and deserves attention; for which reason only it is produced.

Thirdly, the next thing to be inquired into is what concerns "the goings out of" the house or church of God, and what may be meant by them. There are but two ways of going out of a church; either by a dismission from it, or by an excommunication out of it. There are, indeed, letters of recommendation, which are wanting in some cases, though the apostle needed them not (2 Cor. 3:1), such as were given to Apollos (Acts 18:27) to Phebe (Rom. 16:1, 2), and to Marcus (Col. 4:10). But these do not give membership; only transient communion; the person recommended still remains a member from whence he is recommended; the design of such letters is only to certify, that the person whose name is mentioned in them, is a member in full communion with the church which recommends him, and may be safely admitted to transient communion with the church to which he is recommended: but such letters ought not to continue long; for if a person takes up his residence in a place where he is in providence brought, he should send for his dismission, and be received upon it into full communion; a letter of dismission, when approved of, and the person dismissed is received, he is in all respects a member, and then his membership ceases in the church by which he is dismissed, and not before: there are cases in which a man may desire his dismission to another church; as distance of habitation, non-edification, and when a church is become corrupt in doctrine and practice, that he cannot conscientiously abide with them. The other way of going out of a church is excommunication, concerning which it will be necessary to consider various things.

3. What excommunication is.

1. It is not a being reckoned as an heathen man and a publican; nor a delivery of one to Satan, as has been shown.

2. Nor does it affect the temporal estate and civil affairs of a man; it does not subject him to fines, imprisonment, or death; it does not interfere with the business of the civil magistrate; nor does it break in upon the natural and civil relations between man and wife, parents and children, masters and servants; nor forbid attendance on the external ministry of the word.

3. Nor does it admit of degrees; the Jews had three sorts of excommunication, which proceeded gradually; [124] but there is but one among Christians. Some talk indeed of a lesser and a greater excommunication, but without any foundation from the word of God. Some think a suspension from the Lord's table is in some cases necessary; when a case is dubious, and there is not time thoroughly to inquire into it, and yet offence and scandal arises upon it: a person, indeed, may be desired to abstain from the Lord's table, and a man that seeks the peace of the church will consent to it; but he cannot be obliged to abstain; if he is obstinate and refractory, there is no other way but to expel him; for a man is either in communion with a church or he is not; there is no middle state; to withdraw from a disorderly person, or to withdraw and separate him from communion, are the same thing.

4. Excommunication is no other than a removal of a man from the communion of the church, and from all privileges dependent upon it; it is a disfranchising him from all the immunities of a fellow citizen with the saints, and taking from him a place and a name in the house of God; for a church can take no more from him than what it first gave him.

5. This act is pressed by various phrases; as by avoiding familiar conversation with such; by not keeping company with them; and by not eating with them at the Lord's table; by purging out from them the old leaven; and by putting away the wicked from among them; by withdrawing from disorderly persons, and cutting them off from fellowship with them.

2. Who they are that are to be excommunicated.

1. Such who are disturbers of the church's peace, who cause divisions and offences, who are litigious and quarrelsome (1 Cor. 11:16). Such who are

troublers of God's Israel ought to be cut off from his people (Gal. 5:12).

2. Who do not keep their places in the church, do not attend when the church assembles together for religious worship, but forsake the assembling of themselves together, and in a sense forsake the church; whose places are empty, as David's was at supper time, and who do in a sort cut off themselves from the communion of the church (Jude 1:19).

3. All such who walk disorderly, as the above persons do, are irregular in their lives and conversations, guilty of immoralities, though it may be thought of a lesser kind, which they continue and indulge themselves in: as sloth and idleness, not working at all, busybodies, going from house to house, doing mischief, and living upon others; from such the apostle commands us to withdraw ourselves (2 Thess. 3:6, 11, 14).

4. All such who commit atrocious crimes, unrepented of, and continued in; as fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, extortioners, &c. "with such" we are bid "not to eat," especially at the Lord's table; for such ought to have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God, that is, in the church of God (1 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:5).

5. All erroneous and heretical persons, who hold and propagate doctrines contrary to what has been learnt from the word of God, and in the churches of Christ; such are to be avoided and declined from (Rom. 16:17), all such who bring in "damnable heresies," as the apostle calls them; denying the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the Deity of Christ, &c. (2 Peter 2:1), who bring not with them, but oppose the doctrine of Christ, concerning his person and grace; these, as they are not to have a place in the private houses of the saints, ought to have none in the church of God; which is commended for not bearing them that are evil, either unsound in principle, or immoral in life (2 John 1:9-11; Rev. 2:2).

3. By whom excommunication is to be performed.

1. Not by a member himself; no man has a right to cut off himself; such a man is a "felo de se;" as a man cannot come into a church without the consent of it; so neither can he go out of it, without its consent; for a man to depart of himself, is not standing fast in one spirit, but is a cowardly running away from a church; and to go without giving a reason, without asking leave, or desiring a dismission, to say the least of it, is a rude and unmannerly way of departure; and such churches who receive such persons, do not as they would be done by: yea, such men are covenant breakers with a church, which is a great evil, and breakers up of churches, as much as in them lies; for what one member may do, others may; yea, if a member may leave a church at pleasure, a pastor may do the same: in a word, notwithstanding such departure, such persons may be proceeded against by direct excommunication; or, which amounts to much the same, should be declared by a vote of the church, non-members, and no longer under its watch and care; which is by some called indirect excommunication.

2. Nor is it to be performed by any single person of himself, whether an ordinary or an extraordinary minister; it never was done by an apostle, an evangelist, or any other one man; for it is a punishment inflicted by many.

3. Nor is it to be done by the elders of a church separately; much less by the elders of other churches; but by the elders of churches, with the consent of the members of them; for they have a right to do this previous to their having elders, and they have none, as to receive members, so to expel them; the power of it originally lies in the church; the authority of executing it lies in the elders, with the consent and by the order of the church; as the directions to the churches concerning this matter testify.

4. What are the ends of excommunication.

1. The glory of God, which is the ultimate end of it; for as his name is dishonoured by the evil practices or principles of church members, so this is the must open and most effectual way of removing that dishonour that is brought upon it; this ought to be always the chief aim and the sincere view in the administration of it; though sometimes this is only pretence, and under the cover of it, churches gratify sinful passions and resentments; as the Jews of old, in a similar case (Isa. 66:5).

2. Another end is to purge the church, and preserve it from infection; a little leaven leavens the whole lump, and therefore the old leaven must be purged out, that a church may become a new lump; evil communications corrupt good manners, and therefore evil men must be put away from among the saints, (1 Cor. 5:7, 13) lepers were to be put out of the camp, that

they might not infect others; and erroneous persons, whose words do eat as a canker, must be removed from the communion of churches.

3. A church of Christ is like a garden or vineyard, which, if not taken care of, and this ordinance of excommunication not made use of, will be like the vineyard of the slothful, over run with thorns and nettles and other weeds; but by means of this it is cleared of the weeds of immoralities, and the bitter roots of false doctrines are plucked up and eradicated, and withered branches are gathered and cast out.

4. The good of persons excommunicated is another end, and is sometimes effected by it, God blessing his own institution when rightly performed, which is for edification, and not destruction; for the saving of the souls of men; and who are hereby brought to shame and repentance for their sins, and an acknowledgment of them; when they are to be received again with all love and tenderness, and to be comforted, that they might not be swallowed up with over much sorrow (Jude 1:23; 2 Thess. 3:14; 2 Cor. 2:7.)

---

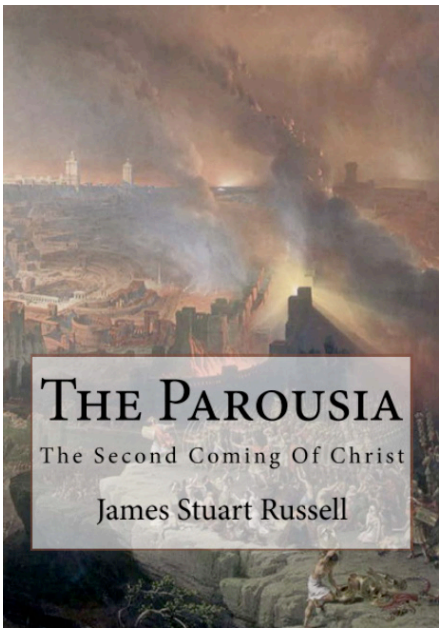
[121] "Ipse clavem imbuit," Acts ii. 22. Tertullian. de Pudicitia, c. 21.

[122] paraitou.

[123] Vid. Rhenferd. observ. select. ad loc. Heb.. Nov. Test. inter ejus opera. p. 729, &c.

[124] Eliae Tisbi in voce ndvy.

The Parousia



Authored by James Stuart Russell

Foreword by Don. K. Preston.

A Reformation - indeed -

a revolution of sorts is taking place in modern evangelical Christianity. And while many who are joining in and helping promote this movement are not even aware of it, the book you hold in your hand has contributed greatly to initiating this new reformation. This "new" movement is sometimes called full preterism, (Also, and preferably by this writer, Covenant Eschatology). It is the belief that all Bible prophecy is fulfilled.

The famous evangelist Charles H. Spurgeon was deeply impressed with the scholarly, solid research in the book, although he did not accept the "final" conclusions reached by Russell. In modern times, this work has, and continues to impress those who read it. The reason is simple, the New Testament is emphatic and unambiguous in positing Christ's coming and the end of the age for the first century generation. To say this has troubled both scholars and laymen alike is an understatement of massive proportions.

This book first appeared in 1878 (anonymously), and again in 1887 with author attribution. The book was well known in scholarly circles primarily and attracted a good bit of attention, both positive and negative. The public, however, seemed almost unaware of the stunning conclusions and the research

supporting those conclusions, until or unless they read of Russell's work in the footnotes of the commentaries.

Scholars have recognized and grappled with this imminence element, that is the stated nearness of the day of the Lord, seldom finding satisfactory answers. Scholars such as David Strauss accused Jesus of failure. Later, Bultmann said that every school boy knows that Jesus predicted his coming and the end of the world for his generation, and every school boy knows it did not happen. C.S. Lewis also could not resolve the apparent failed eschatology. Bertrand Russell rejected Christianity due to the failed eschatology - as he perceived it - of Jesus and the Bible writers. As a result of these "skeptical" authors, modern Bible scholarship has followed in their path and Bible commentaries today almost casually assert the failure of the Bible writers - and Jesus - in their eschatological predictions.

This is where Russell's work is of such importance. While Russell was not totally consistent with his own arguments and conclusions, nonetheless, his work is of tremendous importance and laid the groundwork for the modern revolution known as the preterist movement.

Russell systematically addressed virtually every New Testament prediction of the eschaton. With incisive clarity and logical acumen, he sweeps aside the almost trite objections to the objective nature of the Biblical language of imminence. With excellent linguistic analysis, solid hermeneutic and powerful exegetical skills, Russell shows that there is no way to deny that Jesus and his followers not only believed in a first century, end of the age parousia, but, they taught it as divine truth claiming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as their authority.

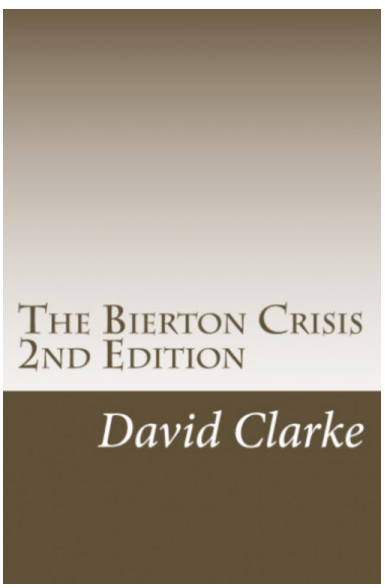
Russell not only fully established the undeniable reality of the first century imminence of "the end," he powerfully and carefully shares with the reader that "the end" that Jesus and the N.T. writers were anticipating was not the end of the time space continuum (end of the world). It was in fact, the end of the Old Covenant Age of Israel that arrived with the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Russell properly shows how the traditional church has so badly missed the incredible significance of the end of that Old Covenant Age.

Russell's work is a stunning rejection - and corrective -- of what the "Orthodox" historical "Creedal" church has and continues to affirm. The reader may well find themselves wondering how the "divines" missed it so badly! Further, the reader will discover that Russell's main arguments are an effective, valid and true assessment of Biblical eschatology. And make no mistake, eschatology matters.

Publication Date: Feb 16 2015
ISBN/EAN13:1508659729 / 9781508659723
Page Count: 604
Binding Type: US Trade Paper
Trim Size: 5.25" x 8"
Language: English
Colour: Black and White
Related Categories: Religion / Theology

CreateSpace eStore:
https://www.createspace.com/5342411

The Bierton Crisis



A Testimony Of David Clarke

The Bierton Crisis is the personal story of David Clarke a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church. He was also the church secretary and minister sent by the church to preach the gospel in 1982.

The Bierton Church was formed in 1832 and was a Gospel Standard cause who's rules of membership are such that only the church can terminate ones membership.

This tells of a crisis that took place in the church in 1984, which led to some members withdrawing support. David, the author, was one of the members who withdrew but the church did not terminate his membership as they wished him return.

This story tells in detail about those errors in doctrine and practices that had crept into the Bierton church and of the lengths taken to put matters right. David maintained and taught Particular Redemption and that the gospel was the rule of life for the believer and not the law of Moses as some church members maintained.

This story tells of the closure of the Bierton chapel when David was on mission work in the Philippines in December 2002 and when the remaining church members died. It tells how David was encouraged by the church overseer to return to Bierton and re-open the chapel.

On David's return to the UK he learned a newly unelected set of trustees had take over the responsibility for the chapel and were seeking to sell it. The story tells how he was refused permission to re open or use the chapel and they sold it as a domestic dwelling, in 2006.

These trustees held doctrinal views that opposed the Bierton church and they denied David's continued membership of the church in order to lay claim too and sell the chapel, using the money from the sale of the chapel for their own purposes.

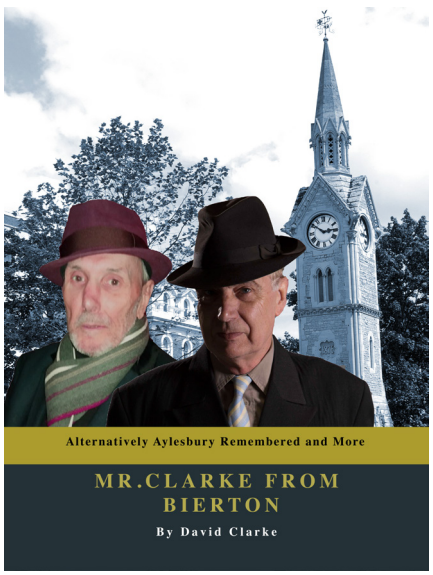
David hopes that his testimony will promote the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as set out in the doctrines of grace, especially Particular Redemption and the rule of life for the believer being the gospel of Christ, the royal law of liberty, and not the law of Moses as some reformed Calvinists teach, will be realized by the reader.

His desire is that any who are called to preach the gospel should examine their own standing and ensure that they can derive from scripture the doctrines and practices they teach and advance and that they can derived the truths they teach from scripture alone and not from the traditions of men or their opinions however well they may be thought of.

Publication Date: Feb 12 2015
ISBN/EAN13:1508465959 / 9781508465959
Page Count: 224
Binding Type: US Trade Paper
Trim Size:5.25" x 8"
Language: English
Colour: Black and White
Related Categories: Religion / Christian Theology / Apologetics

CreateSpace eStore:
https://www.createspace.com/5315294

Mr Clarke from Bierton



Alternatively: Aylesbury Remembered and More

This book tells the life of David Clarke who's formative years were those in Aylesbury. He was born in Oldham. The family moved to Aylesbury in 1962 and lived on the Bedgrove estate having sold their family shop village shop, in Wilstone. David and his elder brother Michael grew up in Aylesbury but unfortunately became young criminals. Michael was sent to Detention Centre, Borstal and then Maidstone prison. David was sent to Dover Borstal at the age of 17. On David's release from Dover Borstal, in 1968 he spent his life dealing with drugs and crime until he had a sudden conversion from crime to Christianity. He turned his back on crime and learned to read to educate himself, which lead to him to making a confession to the police to 24 undetected crime. that he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968.

He went on to Higher Eduction, graduated with a Certificate in Education awarded by Birmingham University, married and moved to Bierton where he became a Baptist minister at the Bierton Particular Baptist church.

He continued his work as a lecturer teaching electronics for over 20 years, in colleges of Further and Higher Education.

This book tells of those significant events in his life and Christian work he was engaged in, not only in Aylesbury and Bierton but also in the Philippines that has now extended to Pakistan.

Publication Date:
May 07 2017
ISBN/EAN13:
1546331212 / 9781546331216
Page Count:
154
Binding Type:
US Trade Paper
Trim Size:
8.5” x 11”
Language:
English
Color:
Full Color
Related Categories:
Biography & Autobiography / Religious